

Salt and Serenity

Za'atar Roast Chicken with Green Tahini Sauce

Very slightly adapted from Yotam Ottolenghi's recipe in the August 2014 issue of Bon Appetit. The addition of crispy pita at the end of the roasting process is the genius idea of Adina Steinman over at epicurious.com.

Serves 4

Green tahini sauce:

- 2 garlic cloves, smashed
- 1 cup (lightly packed) flat-leaf parsley leaves with tender stems
- 1/2 cup tahini
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon Kosher salt
- 1/2 - 3/4 cup water

Chicken and assembly:

- 1 3 1/2–4-pound chicken
- 2 medium red onions, thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, smashed
- 1 lemon, thinly sliced, seeds removed
- 2 teaspoons sumac
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon Kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 cup water
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper
- 2 tablespoons za'atar
- 1/4 cup pine nuts, toasted
- 4 pita breads, torn into 4 inch pieces

Make green tahini sauce: Pulse garlic, parsley, tahini, lemon juice, salt and 1/2 cup water in a food processor, adding more water if needed, until smooth. (Sauce should be the consistency of a thin mayonnaise) Sauce can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and chill.

Remove backbone of chicken: Position the chicken on a cutting board so the backbone is facing up (breast facing down) and the drumsticks are pointing towards you. Working from the cavity opening up to the neck, cut down each side of the **backbone** with a pair of kitchen shears. Discard the **backbone**. Flip chicken over so it is breast side up. Using the palm of your hand, push the carcass open to break the breastbone and flatten out the chicken.

Place onions, garlic, lemon, sumac, allspice, cinnamon, salt, pepper water, and olive oil in a large Ziploc plastic bag. Add chicken, seal bag and shake to distribute marinade evenly. Chill at least 2 hours.

Place chicken, onions, garlic, and lemon on a rimmed baking sheet, spooning any remaining marinade over and around chicken. Sprinkle with za'atar and roast until chicken is browned and cooked through, 45–55 minutes.

Tear pita into large 4 inch pieces. Spread pita on a baking sheet and toast in oven for the last 5 minutes of chicken roasting time. Remove pita from oven and set aside.

Remove chicken and the onion mixture from the rimmed baking sheet to a large plate. Then toss toasted pita in the pan juices that remain on the baking sheet until saturated. Top with the cooked onions and then, finally, the roast chicken, skin-side up. Broil chicken, pita, and onions for a few minutes, until they start to sizzle and the chicken skin is crispy and dark brown.

Transfer chicken, pita and onions to serving platter. Sprinkle with toasted pine nuts. Serve green tahini sauce on the side.