Poplar Creek Public Library District's

SPICE CLUB

SUMAC RECIPES

January 2026

This salad is timely in the fall or winter, when delicate, local, fresh greens disappear after the frost. Look for tight, juicy heads of endive.

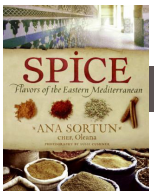
Labne is simply yogurt cheese. Yogurt contains a lot of water, and when you strain the water off, the yogurt becomes thick like ricotta cheese. You can buy labne at most Middle Eastern grocery stores, or you can make it yourself by mixing Greek yogurt with a little salt to taste and straining it overnight in the refrigerator in a colander or sieve lined with cheesecloth. The key to making your own labne is using yogurt that is high in butterfat, so whole-milk yogurt works best. If you use low-fat yogurt, the cheese will have a chalky mouth feel that you can eliminate with a splash of heavy cream, replacing the fat that is needed.

This labne recipe is inspired by my friend Maria Hatziiliades, the best home cook I know. Maria and her husband Max are from Thessaloniki, and I met her while her husband was building the restaurant space for Oleana. Max and Maria have taught me much about Greek food: one year they invited me to Athens to attend their daughter's wedding, and they took me on a several-day whirlwind tour of Greek cuisine. Max also now serves as Oleana's olive oil and ouzo supplier, filling boat containers of organic olive oil and pure organic ouzo and shipping them directly from Greece to the restaurant. Maria made this pecan labne for dinner one night and served it with mastic bread, which is made with the resin from the bark of a mastic tree.

Sprinkle the sumac over the salad at the last minute to make the color stand out. If mixed in with the rest of the ingredients, sumac turns everything purple.

Pair this dish with an off-dry chenin blanc, such as a Vouvray, that marries well with the sweetness of the grapes and apples and the bitterness of the endive.

Excerpt and recipe from the following cookbook



SPICE: FLAVORS OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

by Ana Sortun

Call #: 641.6383 Sor

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ENDIVE AND APPLE SALAD WITH GRAPES, SUMAC, AND PECAN LABNE

Makes 6 Servings

1 cup pecan pieces

2 small crisp eating apples, such as Fuji or Granny Smith, unpeeled

1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint

1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill

1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste

1 small bunch red seedless grapes (about ½ pound), stemmed and washed

2 teaspoons finely chopped garlic (about 2 cloves)

1 ½ cups labne
(a substitute for labne is Greek yogurt or sour cream)

3 tablespoons ground zwieback crackers or plain melba toast

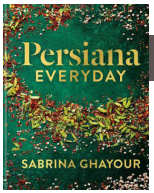
3 heads endive

1 teaspoon sumac

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Toast the pecan pieces on a heavy baking sheet for about 6 minutes and until they are fragrant. Cool for at least 10 minutes.
3. Core the apples and slice them in very thin rounds, about 1/8 inch thick. Julienne them by slicing across the rings into very skinny sticks. If you own a mandoline slicer, you can use the julienne blade.
4. Place the apples in a small mixing bowl and toss them with the parsley, mint, and dill and 2 teaspoons of the lemon juice and 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Season them lightly with salt and pepper.
5. Cut the grapes in half, figuring 4 to 5 grapes per person, and add them to the apple mixture.
6. Place the garlic and the remaining 1 teaspoon of lemon juice in a small mixing bowl and let stand for 5 minutes to soften the raw garlic flavor.
7. Add the labne, the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil, the zwieback crumbs, and season with salt and pepper, and stir.
8. Finely chop the lightly toasted pecans by hand or in a food processor, fitted with a metal blade. Reserve 1 tablespoon of the nuts for garnish and add the rest to the labne mixture.
9. Trim the bottom ends of the endive and remove the leaves, one by one. You will need to trim the bottom one more time to loosen the leaves. When you reach the heart or center of the endive and the leaves become very small and tight, set them aside.
10. Slice the endive hearts into thin rings and stir them into the apple mixture.
11. Assemble the salad by placing a quarter cup of labne on the bottom of each salad plate.
12. Using the back of a spoon, smooth the labne into a 2-inch circle. Arrange 5 endive spears on each plate, at a slight angle, sticking the bottom of the spears into the labne.
13. Spoon ½ tablespoon of the apple mixture over each endive spear. Sprinkle sumac and reserved pecan pieces over the salads and serve.

Chickpeas are a fantastic staple for me. From using them to make falafels and soups and stews to roasting them as snacks or mashing them with spices and cheese as a sandwich filling, I've covered every angle in my recipes. They are also ideal for making quick salads, being great carriers of flavour. This vibrant and delicious example can be thrown together in minutes, perfect for a meal in a pinch or for adding a little extra pizzazz to a feast.

Excerpt and recipe from the following cookbook



PERSIANA EVERYDAY

by Sabrina Ghayour

Call #: 641.5955 Gha

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BAZAAR SPICED CHICKPEA & FETA SALAD

Makes 4 Servings

400g can chickpeas, drained

4 sprigs of mint, leaves picked, rolled up tightly and cut into ribbons

4 sprigs of basil, leaves picked, rolled up tightly and cut into ribbons

4 spring onions, thinly sliced from root to tip

100g feta cheese, crumbled

100g pomegranate seeds

DRESSING
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

juice of ½ lemon

1 teaspoon clear honey

1 heaped teaspoon sumac

½ teaspoon ground cumin

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

Maldon sea salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper

1. Put all the ingredients for the salad into a bowl and toss together.

2. Mix all the dressing ingredients together in a jug or small bowl until evenly combined, seasoning well with salt and pepper.

3. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss again. Serve at room temperature.

This recipe is an ode to sumac – originally from Palestine, where they serve a whole chicken with sumac on bread, topped with a whole lot of sumac-spiced onions. Using the same ingredients, we make a Syrian version here by shredding the chicken, then frying it with onion and sumac and rolling it up in flatbread.

Excerpt and recipe from the following cookbook

SUMAC: RECIPES AND STORIES FROM SYRIA

by Anas Atassi

Call #: 641.595691 Ata

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MUSAKHAN WRAPS– FLATBREAD WITH SHREDDED CHICKEN, ONION AND SUMAC

Makes 6 Servings

3 chicken breasts

1 a'atryaat garni
(2 cinnamon sticks, 2 cloves, 3 green cardamom pods and 1 bay leaf tied in a bundle)

Salt and pepper

100 ml (1/3 cup) of olive oil

5 large onions (coarsely chopped)

3 tablespoons of sumac

25 g (1 oz) of pine nuts (toasted)

6 flatbreads or tortillas

LABAN BI KHYAR
400 g (14 oz) of Greek yoghurt

½ cucumber (very thinly sliced)

2 garlic cloves (pressed)

Juice of 1 organic lemon

1 tablespoon of dried mint or 1 bunch of fresh mint (minced)

Salt

TO SERVE
Extra-virgin olive oil

Mint leaves

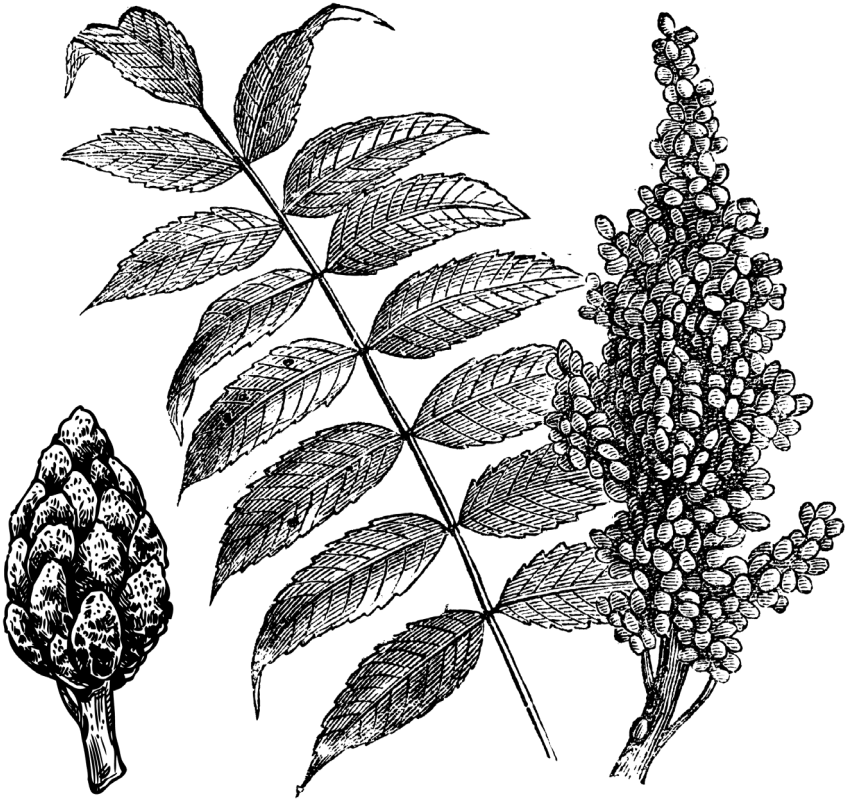
1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add the chicken breasts, the a'atryaat garni and a pinch of salt and pepper. Cook the chicken for 20 minutes.

2. Drain the chicken breasts and cool. When they are cool enough to handle, shred the meat with your fingers.

3. Heat half of the olive oil in a saucepan on medium heat. Fry the onion for 5 minutes. Add the shredded chicken, sumac and pine nuts and the remaining 50 ml (2½ tablespoons) of olive oil. Fry everything together for 5 minutes. Salt and pepper to taste.

4. Ladle a few spoonfuls of the shredded chicken onto each flatbread. Wrap the flatbread toward the inside and then fold it into a rectangle.

5. Heat a chargrill pan on high heat and cook the wraps for 2 minutes on each side until golden and crispy. Serve them warm with laban bi khyar (cucumber yogurt sauce).



Did You Know?

- Sumac is an edible round berry from a tree related to the mango
- There are many species of sumac
- Sumac grows on a shrub in southern Europe and in the Middle East
- Sumac is an essential component in the spice blend Za'tar

Sources:
The Book of Spice: from anise to Zedoary by John O'Connell - 641.3383 Oco

Spice: Flavors of the Eastern Mediterranean by Ana Sortun - 641.6383 Sor

Spiced: Unlock the Power of Spices to Transform Your Cooking - 641.6383 Spi

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