

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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TO Codex Contact Points
Contact Points of international organizations having observer status with Codex

FROM Secretariat,
Codex Alimentarius Commission,
Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme

SUBJECT Proposed draft Regional Standard for Mixed Zaatar

DEADLINE No comments requested

BACKGROUND

1. The 8th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for the Near East (CCNE) (June 2015) noted general support for the development of a regional standard for mixed Zaatar (mixed thyme). The Committee therefore agreed to retain the product as a regional standard and to establish an electronic working group led by Lebanon working in Arabic and English to prepare a revised proposed draft standard for consideration at its next session with a view to its completion and final adoption by the 40th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) in 2017. The Committee so returned standard for further development, comments and consideration at its next session.¹
2. The standard has not been circulated for comments due to late receipt. It is presented in the Appendix for consideration by the Committee.
3. The Committee will consider the standard under Agenda Item 9.

¹ REP15/NE, paras. 50-73

PROPOSED DRAFT REGIONAL STANDARD FOR MIXED ZAAATAR**1. SCOPE**

This standard determines the requirements and characteristics that shall be present in mixed Zaatar intended for direct human consumption and used in many food preparations such as Lebanese mankoushe, etc.

2. DESCRIPTION**2.1 DEFINITION****2.1.1 Mixed Zaatar**

It is the mix consisting of raw thyme and broadleaf thyme, as defined below, and the husk of sumac and sesame seeds, to which other ingredients may be added. The classification of Zaatar shall be as shown in section 2.2.

2.1.2 Raw Zaatar

It is the blossoms and/or leaves of the following wild and cultivated plants, which are manually or mechanically crumbled provided they are not powdered.

- Origanum sp.
- Thymbra sp.
- Thymus sp.
- Satureja sp.

Raw Zaatar is called raw broadleaf thyme when it is composed of the blossoms and/or leaves of the wild or cultivated broadleaf thyme, namely *Organicum syriacum* (by at least 75%) or constitutes a mix (by 25% maximum) of the blossoms and leaves of the following varieties, which are manually or mechanically crumbled provided they are not powdered.

- Origanum ehrenbergii
- Thymbra spicata
- Coridothymus capitatus
- Thymus syriacus
- Satureia thymbra

2.2 CLASSIFICATION

Mixed Zaatar is classified as follows:

2.2.1 "Premium" Mixed Zaatar:

It shall consist of at least 25% of raw broadleaf thyme mixed exclusively with: sesame seeds and sumac husk, with the possibility of adding salt by 6% maximum.

2.2.2 "Extra" Mixed Zaatar:

It shall consist of at least 20% of raw thyme or raw broadleaf thyme mixed with: sesame seeds and sumac husk, with the possibility of adding grains, nuts, spices and condiments, as well as salt by 6% maximum.

2.2.3 "Regular" Mixed Zaatar:

It shall consist of at least 15% of raw broadleaf thyme or raw thyme mixed with sesame seeds and sumac husk which should be added by at least 5%, in addition to the following possible ingredients: legumes, aromatic grains and herbs grains, volatile herbs, spices, condiments (cumin...), pomegranate molasses, vegetable oil, nuts, wheat bran and sesame seed hull, provided they all meet the good manufacturing practices, with the possibility of adding salt by 7% maximum and citric acid by 4% maximum, provided they are indicated on the label.

2.2.4 Forms

Any form of the product should be permissible provided it meets the related requirements in this standard, and an adequate description of the product is provided on the label to ensure that consumers are not misled or confused.

3. ESSENTIAL COMPOSITION AND QUALITY FACTORS

3.1 COMPONENTS

3.1.1 Basic Ingredients

Raw Zaatar shall be as defined in sub-section 2.1.2 above.

3.2 OPTIONAL INGREDIENTS

- Sumac husk
- Sesame seeds
- Legumes
- Grains
- Volatile herbs
- Spices and condiments (cumin ...)
- Pomegranate molasses
- Vegetable oil
- Nuts
- Wheat bran

3.3 QUALITY STANDARDS

3.3.1 Taste and Color

- The thyme contained in the product must have special flavor and smell and be free of any extraneous odors and flavors, including rancidity and moldiness, as well as of any extraneous substances.
- The product must have a normal color and a consistency that is typical of such kind of products.

3.1.2 Chemical and Physical Characteristics

3.3.1.2 *Requirements and Characteristics*

3.3.2.1.1 General Requirements

The following characteristics shall be observed in mixed Zaatar:

All the ingredients used in the preparation of the mixed Zaatar shall be in conformity with their corresponding Codex Alimentarius standards.

It shall be free of living insects and spiders, practically free of any visible moldiness, dead insects and parts thereof, contamination by rodents, birds and snails waste (and magnification might be used for detection in some cases, provided the magnifying power is determined if it exceeds 10 folds, which shall be indicated in the test results report).

The final product shall not be in a powder form in order to ensure its main ingredients are recognizable by microscopic inspection (leaves, blossoms, straws...) or visible to the naked eye, to avoid fraud and concealing of impurities therein, and to ensure that higher levels of volatile oils are maintained. The straws, if any, must not be longer than 10 mm and more than 2 mm in diameter, and must not make more than 5% (mass/mass) of the product.

Any extraneous substances of non-vegetable origin found in the product, such as pebbles, soil, sand, dust, etc. or of non-food vegetable origin, such as wood, dry leaves, must not make more than 1% (mass/mass) of the product.

3.3.3.1.2 Chemical Requirements

The following chemical requirements, as stated in table 1, shall be observed in the thyme and the mixed Zaatar:

Table (1): Chemical Requirements

Characteristics		Requirements		
		Premium Mixed Zaatar	Extra Mixed Zaatar	Regular Mixed Zaatar
Humidity % (m/m) maximum		12	12	12
Total table salt % (m/m based on the dry matter) maximum		6	6	7
Total ash, excluding salt % (m/m based on the dry matter) maximum*		7	7	7
Total ash % (m/m based on the dry matter) maximum		14	14	15
Acid insoluble ash % (m/m based on the dry matter) maximum		1	1	1
Raw fibers % (m/m based on the dry matter) maximum		16	15	37
Volatile oils % (ml/100g based on the dry matter) minimum		0.37	0.13	0.1
Maximum superoxide number		-	-	10 ml of superoxide oxygen/kg of oil
Malic acid/citric acid proportion, minimum		10	10	0.14
Basic Components Volatile Oils	Carvacrol+Thymol	More than 70%	More than 85%	More than 85%
	Cymene, gamma-terpinene and other volatile oils	Less than 30%		

4. FOOD ADDITIVES

- Only citric acid may be added up to a maximum of 4% of the regular mixed Zaatar according to the good manufacturing practices, provided it is clearly indicated on the label.
- No colorants may be added.

5. CONTAMINANTS**5.1 PESTICIDE RESIDUES:**

The products covered by this Standard shall comply with the maximum residue limits for pesticides established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

5.2 OTHER MINERAL CONTAMINANTS:

Contaminants are only allowed if they do not exceed the following limits:

- Elements : maximum limit allowed (mg/kg)
- Arsenic (As) : 0.5
- Lead (Pb) : 0.3
- Cadmium (Cd) : 0.2

5.3 The radioactive substances must not exceed the permitted levels as set out in the General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed (CODEX STAN 193-1995).

6. HYGIENE

6.1 It is recommended that the products covered by the provisions of this Standard be prepared and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the General Principles of Food Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969) and other relevant Codex texts such as codes of hygienic practice and codes of practice.

6.2 The products should comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria related to Foods (CAC/GL 21-1997).

7. LABELLING

The products covered by the provisions of this Standard shall be labelled in accordance with the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985). Any health claims shall be in conformity with the Guidelines for Use of Nutrition and Health Claims (CAC/GL 23-1973) when necessary. In addition, the following specific provisions apply:

7.1 NAME OF PRODUCT

7.1.1 Mixed Zaatar or mixed thyme

7.1.2 The classification shall be indicated according to that in sub-section 2.2 next to the product name.

7.1.3 The word "baladi (local)" may appear next to the name if the mixed Zaatar is made of varieties of raw thyme - wild or cultivated - that have the same country of origin.

7.2 COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

The country of origin of the product and/or of the raw substance must be declared.

7.3 LABELLING OF NON-RETAIL PACKAGES

Information for non-retail containers shall be given either on the container or in accompanying documents, except that the name of the product, lot identification, and the name and address of the manufacturer, packer, distributor or importer, as well as storage instructions, shall appear on the container. However, lot identification, and the name and address of the manufacturer, packer, distributor or importer may be replaced by an identification mark, provided that such a mark is clearly identifiable with the accompanying documents.

8. METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING

<u>Element</u>	<u>Test Method</u>
Acidity	AOAC 935.57, 16 th Edition, 1995.
Added citric acid	The content of the added citric acid shall be determined by testing the following organic acids: Malic acid and citric acid by applying HPLC method and calculating the malic acid/citric acid proportion which must not fall below 10/1 (Malic acid ten times the citric acid). The malic acid is extracted from the sumac husk and by comparing the result to the proportion, the quantity of the added citric acid can be calculated.
Sodium chloride	AOAC Official Method 960.29,
Humidity	AOAC 925.10, 16 th Edition, 1995
Total ash	AOAC 923.03, 16 th Edition, 1995.
Acid insoluble ash	AOAC 941.12, 16 th Edition, 1995.
Raw fibres	AOAC 962.09, 16 th Edition, 1995.
Volatile oils	ISO 1984:6571

<u>Element</u>	<u>Test Method</u>
Arsenic	AOAC 986.15. 16 th Edition, 1995
Lead	AOAC 972.25, 16 th Edition, 1995.
Water insoluble ash	ISO 929:1980
Copper	AOAC 971.20, 16 th Edition, 1995
Colorants	HPLC method shall be applied to make sure that none of the following colorants was added: Tartrazine (E102), Quinoline (E104), Sunset yellow (E110), Carmoisine (E122), Amaranth (E123), Ponceau 4R (E124), Erythrosine (E127), Allura Red (E129), Brilliant Blue (E133), Sudan I, Sudan II, Sudan III, Sudan IV, Rhodamine B, Orange II
Mycotoxins	The content of the mycotoxins mentioned in the standard shall be determined through Elisa and HPLC methods
Superoxide number	AOAC 965.33, 16 th Edition, 1995

8.2 SAMPLING METHODS

To obtain a number of samples representing the batch, the sampling plans shown in the Codex Alimentarius Standard "Sampling of Packaged Products" are recommended to be followed.

9. REFERENCES