

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy - Tel: (+39) 06 57051 - E-mail: codex@fao.org - www.codexalimentarius.org

Agenda Item 10

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE NEAR EAST
Tenth Session

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**REPORT OF THE IN-SESSION WORKING GROUP ON THE DRAFT REGIONAL STANDARD FOR
MIXED ZAAATAR**

1. INTRODUCTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.1. CCNE10 agreed to establish an In-Session Working Group (WG) open to all Members and Observers, chaired by Lebanon and working in English and Arabic, to address the comments received on the draft standard for mixed zaatar and to prepare a revised draft for consideration by the plenary. For this purpose, Lebanon chaired an In-Session Working Group (WG) attended by delegates from the following countries: Egypt, Palestine, Jordan and in the presence of the chairperson of CCNE.

2. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

2.1. Section 2.1.1: The WG added the word “dry” before raw zaatar and raw broadleaf zaatar to become: “It is the mix consisting of dried raw zaatar and dried raw broadleaf zaatar”

2.2. Section 2.2.1, the WG changed the level of permitted salt in the three categories from 6% and 7% respectively to 4% across the three categories. Also changed the minimum raw zaatar to 40%, 30% and 15% respectively in the three categories.

2.3. The WG made editorial changes in the title of section 3.1.1 “Main ingredient for mixed zaatar” and also in the title of section 3.1.2 “Optional Ingredients for regular mixed Zaatar only”.

2.4. Table 1 in section 3.2.2.1: the WG removed the size of the straws and kept only the % that changed also from 5 to 2%.

2.5. Section 3.2 was reorganized into section 3.2.1 general requirements, 3.2.2 for Physical and chemical characteristics where 3.2.2.1 for Physical characteristics and 3.2.2.2 for chemical characteristics.

2.6. Section 3.2.2.1: The WG changed the definition of physical characteristics and provided a definition for them aligned with the one provided in the CXC 328 – 2017 related to dried Thyme. In addition we changed the level of extraneous vegetable matter from 5% to 2%.

2.7. Section 3.2.2.2: The WG removed from the chemical requirements table the following parameters: total ash, volatile oils, raw fibers, peroxide value and malic to citric ratio.

2.8. The WG rewrote section 4 on food additives by removing section 4.1 stating that no additives are allowed for premium and extra zaatar leaving on statement: “Only the following food additive is permitted for regular mixed zaatar” and citric acid level was changed to GMP as per the codex standard on food additives.

2.9. Section 8.1: The WG removed the table detailing various testing methods and replaced it with the general statement used in other codex standards: “For checking the compliance with this standard, the methods of analysis and sampling contained in the Recommended Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CXS 234-1999) relevant to the provisions in this standard, shall be used.”

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

3.1. The WG considered the draft regional standard contained in CX/NE 19/10/13, discussed comments received¹ and agreed to amend the draft as presented in Appendix I.

3.2. CCNE10 is invited to consider and agree the proposed draft regional standard for mixed zaatar as amended by the WG and presented in Appendix I.

¹ CX/NE 19/10/CRD4 and CX/NE 19/10/CRD5

APPENDIX I**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

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

It is the mix consisting of dried raw zaatar and dried raw broadleaf zaatar, as defined below, and the husk of sumac, and sesame seeds, to which other ingredients may be added. The classification of mixed 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 but not powdered.

- *Origanum* spp.
- *Thymbra* spp.
- *Thymus* spp.
- *Satureja* spp.

2.1.2.1 Raw Broadleaf Zaatar

It is called raw broadleaf zaatar when it is composed of the blossoms and/or leaves of the wild or cultivated broadleaf zaatar, namely *Origanum syriacum* (at least 75%) or constitutes a mix (25% maximum) of the blossoms and leaves of the following varieties, which are manually or mechanically crumbled but 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 40% raw broadleaf zaatar mixed exclusively with sesame seeds and sumac husk, with the possibility of adding salt to a maximum level of 4%.

2.2.2 “Extra” Mixed Zaatar

It shall consist of at least 30% raw zaatar or raw broadleaf zaatar mixed with sesame seeds and sumac husk, with the possibility of adding grains, nuts, spices and condiments, as well as salt to a maximum level of 4%.

2.2.3 “Regular” Mixed Zaatar

It shall consist of at least 15% raw broadleaf zaatar or raw zaatar, mixed with sesame seeds and sumac husk which should be added to a level of at least 5%, in addition to the following possible ingredients: legumes, aromatic grains and herbs, spices, condiments (e.g. 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 to a maximum level of 4% and citric acid according to GMP, provided they are indicated on the label.

3. ESSENTIAL COMPOSITION AND QUALITY FACTORS

3.1 COMPOSITION

3.1.1 Main Ingredient for mixed Zaatar

Raw zaatar as defined in Section 2.1.2.

3.1.2 Optional Ingredients **for regular mixed Zaatar only**

- Legumes
- Grains
- Volatile herbs
- Spices and condiments (e.g. cumin, ...)
- Pomegranate molasses
- Vegetable oil
- Nuts
- Wheat bran

3.2 QUALITY FACTORS

3.2.1 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.
- 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 product must have a special flavour and smell and be free of any extraneous odours and flavours, including rancidity and mouldiness, as well as of any extraneous substances.
- **The product should be stored in a cool and dry place.**

3.2.2 Physical and Chemical Characteristics

3.2.2.1 *Physical requirements*

Table (1): Physical Requirements

Parameter	Requirement
Extraneous vegetable matter ¹	Must not make up more than 2% (mass/mass) of the product.
Foreign matter ²	Must not make up more than 1% (mass/mass) of the product.
Living insects and spiders, any visible moldiness, dead insects and parts thereof, contamination by rodents, birds and snails waste ³	Free

¹ Vegetative matter associated with the plant from which the product originates - but is not accepted as part of the final product".

² Any visible objectionable foreign detectable matter or material not usually associated with the natural components of the spice plant; such as sticks, stones, burlap bagging, metal etc.

³ magnifications might be used for detection in some cases, and the magnifying power used should be indicated in the test results report.

3.2.2.2 Chemical Requirements

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

Table (2): Chemical Requirements

Characteristics	Requirements		
	Premium Mixed Zaatar	Extra Mixed Zaatar	Regular Mixed Zaatar
Moisture % (m/m) maximum	12	12	12
Total table salt % (m/m based on the dry matter) maximum	4	4	4
Acid insoluble ash % (m/m based on the dry matter) maximum	1	1	1

4. FOOD ADDITIVES

Only the following food additive is permitted for regular mixed zaatar:

INS No.	Name of Additive	Maximum Level
Acidity Regulators		
330	Citric acid	GMP

5. CONTAMINANTS

- 5.1 The products covered by this Standard shall comply with the maximum levels of the *General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed* (CODEX STAN 193-1995).
- 5.2 The products covered by this Standard shall comply with the maximum residue limits for pesticides established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

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 product 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 Section 2.2 next to the product name.

7.2 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

8.1 METHODS OF ANALYSIS

For checking the compliance with this standard, the methods of analysis and sampling contained in the Recommended Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CXS 234-1999) relevant to the provisions in this standard, shall be used."

8.2 SAMPLING PLANS

To be developed