

## Za'atar-Roasted Chicken with Chickpeas

Serves 4

### Ingredients

- Olive oil – 45 ml (3 Tbsp)
- Lemon juice – 45 ml (3 Tbsp, from 1–1½ lemons)
- **Za'atar substitute blend** – see below
- Salt + MSG blend – 1.2 g salt + 0.3 g MSG ( $\approx \frac{1}{8}$  tsp total)
- Black pepper –  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp (0.5 g)
- Chicken thighs, boneless – 680 g
- Chickpeas (缶詰または茹でたもの) – 250 g, drained and rinsed
- Yellow onion – 1 small (100 g), cut into 1 cm wedges
- Lemon –  $\frac{1}{2}$  medium, sliced thin ( $\approx 40$  g)
- Garlic –  $\frac{1}{2}$  head, halved crosswise
- Feta cheese – 60 g, crumbled (see *substitutions*)
- Fresh cilantro or parsley – 2 Tbsp, chopped



### Za'atar Substitute (makes $\approx 1\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp)

- Dried thyme – 1 tsp
- Dried oregano or marjoram – 1 tsp
- Toasted sesame seeds – 1 tsp
- Ground cumin –  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp
- Paprika –  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp
- Lemon zest –  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp
- Optional: pinch chili flakes or coriander

Mix and store airtight. This blend mimics za'atar's herbal, citrus, and nutty flavor.

### Instructions

1. **Preheat oven:** **220 °C** (upper rack).
2. **Make marinade:** Whisk **olive oil**, **lemon juice**, **za'atar blend**, **salt + MSG**, and **pepper**.
3. **Combine:** Add **chicken**, **chickpeas**, and **onion**; toss to coat. Arrange on a lined baking sheet, chicken on top. Add **lemon slices** and **garlic** halves (cut-side down).
4. **Roast:** **Bake 25–28 min** for boneless thighs ( $\approx 35$  min if bone-in). Chicken is done at **74 °C**; chickpeas should be golden.
5. **Finish:** Squeeze softened **garlic** over the chickpeas. Sprinkle **feta** and **cilantro** before serving.

### Feta Substitutions

- **Goat cheese (chèvre):** same weight, slightly tangier.
- **Cotija / Queso Fresco:** crumbly, salty, often available at Seijo Ishii or Kaldi.
- **Greek-style yogurt + salt:** 60 g strained yogurt + pinch salt for a mild, creamy option.

### Nutrition

**Per Serving:** Kcal 390 | Protein 29 g | Fat 23 g | Sat Fat 6 g | Carbs 18 g | Sugars 3 g | Fiber 5 g | Sodium 690 mg (incl. MSG)

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### Lebanese-Style Finishing Notes

- Add ¼ tsp each **ground cumin** and **ground coriander** to the marinade.
  - Include ¼ tsp **dried mint** or 1 Tbsp fresh mint before roasting.
  - Replace 1 Tbsp lemon juice with **pomegranate juice** or ½ tsp **rice vinegar** for sumac-like tang.
  - Finish with a drizzle of **olive oil** and sprinkle **toasted sesame seeds**.
  - Serve with warm **pita bread** or a **yogurt-sesame sauce** below.
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### Yogurt–Sesame Sauce (Tahini Alternative)

Since tahini isn't easy to find in Japan, use **ぬりごま (nurigoma)** instead. It's made from finely ground sesame and works beautifully.

#### Combine:

- 2 Tbsp **ぬりごま** (white or golden)
- 3 Tbsp Greek yogurt (Oikos plain, nonfat)
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1 small garlic clove, grated
- Pinch salt

Mix until smooth. Thin with a little water if needed.

→ Serve drizzled over the chicken or on the side for dipping.

### Ingredient Availability Notes (Japan-Friendly Substitutions)

- **Chickpeas (ひよこ豆水煮)**: Commonly sold in cans or pouches at Kaldi, Seijo Ishii, or supermarkets such as Aeon and Summit. Drain well before use.
- **ぬりごま (Nurigoma)**: Readily available in both white and black varieties. Use the white version as a direct tahini substitute for sauces and dressings.
- **Feta Cheese**: Sometimes available at Costco, Seijo Ishii, or Kaldi; if unavailable, replace with goat cheese, cottage cheese, or thick Greek yogurt with a pinch of salt.
- **Cilantro (パクチー)**: Widely sold fresh in Tokyo grocery stores; substitute Italian parsley if unavailable.
- **Lemons**: Domestic Setouchi or imported varieties are fine; bottled lemon juice can substitute if fresh lemons are limited.
- **Olive Oil**: Use high-quality extra-virgin types like Bosco or Gallo (commonly stocked in Japanese supermarkets).
- **MSG**: Replace part of salt with **味の素®** or equivalent (use 80 % salt : 20 % MSG ratio, already calculated in this recipe).
- **Chickpea Alternatives**: Cooked white beans (**大福豆**) or lentils (**レンズ豆**) can be substituted for a slightly softer texture.