

YUMMY NORTHWEST

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DOWN BY THE SEA

Did you ever go for a swim at the beach and find your foot gently wrapped in slimy green fronds? Next time that happens, bring some back to the picnic table with you and delight your buddies who were expecting only potato salad with their burgers.

Seaweed is a bountiful resource. These ocean vegetables provide abundant essential vitamins and minerals, with lots of fiber and no fat or cholesterol.

The Irish have long used carrageenan, or Irish moss, as a thickener. (Look for this ingredient in many American foods, too.) Laverbread, a classic Welsh dish, is made from a boiled puree of laver (similar to nori), mixed with cream and oats, then made into small cakes and fried with bacon.

Give seaweed a try. A nice bowl of Jell-O-like kanten (see recipe on page 2) may be just what the doctor ordered.

Japanese memories

M., Seattle, taught English in Japan and learned to enjoy seaweed in many forms. She says dashi, a broth made from kombu, and sushi remain favorites. She writes:

"A common form of seaweed, nori, is pounded and dried into sheets. Nori allows you to eat food with your hands that would ordinarily require chopsticks. Traditional rice balls, for example, are eaten with chopsticks, but nori allows you to eat a rice ball on the run. I frequently bought nori-wrapped rice balls in the local convenience store. The rice "ball" was actually pressed into a triangle shape around a core of something tasty – a pickled plum or a piece of tuna – and wrapped with nori. But plastic film was used to separate the nori from the rice and keep it crisp, so the triangle shape allowed you to remove the film and rewrap the rice in one smooth move, and the nori kept your hands away from the sticky rice.

"The worst kind of seaweed was cooked like spinach, or – more specifically – like that canned spinach my mother made me eat. It tasted OK but just wasn't visually appealing."

Crave more nutrients? Eat your (sea) greens.

"Ounce for ounce, sea vegetables are higher in vitamins and minerals than any other class of food..." (Cynthia Lair in her book, "Feeding the Whole Family")

An average woman needs 1000 mg of calcium daily.

A glass of milk has 300 mg and 2 oz. of Swiss cheese 530 mg.

Here are calcium contents for typical portions of seaweed:

agar-agar flakes
1/3 oz. dry = 44.5 mg

hijiki
2 oz. dry = 60.8 mg (29.6 mg sodium)

kombu
2 oz. dry = 50.7 mg (124 mg sodium)

wakame
1.5 oz. dry = 82 mg (48.9 mg sodium)

For comparison, here's another way of looking at calcium contents.

Calcium per 1 cup of:

hijiki, dry = 3220 mg
arame, dry = 2691 mg
agar-agar, dry = 1438 mg
tofu = 300 mg
turnip greens = 200 mg
celery = 50 mg
broccoli = 40 mg



Vinegared rice in a neat green wrapper

While you expect Japanese restaurants to use seaweed in their dishes, few other Northwest restaurants do (but try the Soba Salad at **Café Flora** in Seattle's Madison Park neighborhood). Sushi is your best bet for a seaweed treat. I don't know why the places selling it have such goofy names, but the food is seriously delicious. Here are a few to enjoy.

I Love Sushi
11818 NE 8th St.
Bellevue, Wash. 98005
(425) 454-5706

Rikki Rikki
442 Parkplace Center
Kirkland, Wash. 98033
(425) 828-0707

Tuna House
15015 Main St.
Located at 148th and Main
Bellevue, Wash. 98007
(425) 746-012

When you're on the Long Beach Peninsula, be sure to indulge in Sushi Night at the **Heron and Beaver Pub**, Wed. 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Chef Lynne Pelletier offers 12 kinds of sushi plus a weekly special. You even get a deliciously warm towel to wipe your weary hands. Call ahead to make sure the evening is not pre-empted. (360) 642-4142

After you eat, why not go to a **Gene Juarez** spa for an Algae Body Masque. (206) 326-6000

Arame with Shiitake Mushrooms

1 cup arame
1 cup snow peas
4 dried shiitake mushrooms
1 tablespoon soy sauce
1 tablespoon finely grated ginger
1-2 teaspoons sesame seed oil
2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds

1. Rinse the arame in water and drain. Clean and rinse the snow peas.
2. Wash the mushrooms and soak them in water until they are soft. To speed up the process, use water brought to a boil to cover the mushrooms. After the mushrooms are reconstituted, trim off the stems and slice.
3. Put 1 tablespoon of water and 2 teaspoons of soy sauce in a sauté pan. Add the sliced mushrooms and sauté them for 3 minutes. Add the arame, soy sauce and just enough water to cover the mushrooms.
4. Cover, bring to a boil, and cook for 15 minutes.
5. Add snow peas and cook for 3 to 5 minutes, until snow peas are just tender. Don't overcook.
6. Drain excess liquid, put into a bowl, and season with remaining soy sauce, ginger and sesame oil. Garnish with sesame seeds.

Serves 6

- "Delicious" magazine, October 1999

And for dessert ... Apple Kantan

4 cups apple or strawberry-apple juice
Pinch of salt
4 tablespoons agar-agar flakes
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
2 cups fresh or frozen strawberries

In a saucepan, slowly bring the juice, salt and agar-agar to a simmer over medium heat without stirring. When the mixture begins to simmer, stir gently for 3 minutes. Remove from heat. Add the lemon juice. Place the strawberries in a deep bowl or mold and add the warm juice mixture. Set in a cool place or refrigerate until firm, 1-2 hours.

Serves 6

-The Natural Health Cookbook, by Dana Jacobi



Get more, learn more

Don't know where to buy this seaweed stuff? There are several sources in the Seattle area including **Uwajimaya** (also has cooking classes), **Whole Foods Market** and **Mutual Fish Company**. The **Puget Consumers Co-op** (PCC) FoodWorks class schedule often includes lessons in using the dried seaweed they sell. Classes I've taken include:

- * Calcium Without the Cow
- * The Sea Is a Garden: Super Sea Vegetables
- * Scrumptious Vegetarian Sushi

Though not in the Northwest, the **Mendocino Sea Vegetable Company** has been around for several years on the California coast, harvesting goodies from the sea and now selling them online. Visit www.seaweed.net.

Tasty morsels

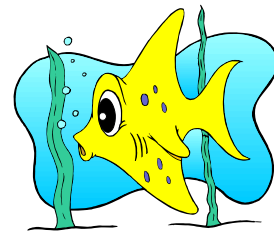
You're home alone with some seaweed you bought ... now what do you do?

Dulse is a good one to try first. Some describe its flavor as a "nutty, seafood, bacon" taste. Even I can eat it right out of the package.

A small bit of any seaweed can be slipped unobtrusively into soups, stews, stir-fries, and the cooking water of beans, rice or grains (remove the green stuff when draining the water). I rather think seaweed and seafood were meant to go together, so try a combination of your choice.

I sneak the nutritious green bits into many dishes by sprinkling on a blend of seaweed and sesame seeds called Ao Nori Gomo Furikaki under the brand name of Urashima, a shaker full of goodness I bought at Uwajimaya. Believe it or not, you'll hardly notice this on pizza, sandwiches, salads, mashed potatoes or popcorn.

Surprisingly, seaweed isn't all that salty, though it makes a worthy salt substitute. I have found that its ocean-y flavor evokes saltiness. It might take some getting used to, but seaweed is definitely a vegetable your health-conscious mother would want you to eat.



About YUMMY NORTHWEST

Each monthly issue highlights an edible delight available in the Pacific Northwest.

Contact the editor

Comments, corrections, topic ideas and submissions are all most welcome.
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