

# SEA VEGETABLES



## A CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO SHOPPING, COOKING & EATING "GREEN"



### GLOSSARY (CONT.)

#### Kombu

(*Sea Cabbage*) The most commonly used seaweed, kombu is particularly good with beans. Add a 4-6 inch strip to soups, stews, beans, or brown rice as they cook. When cooking time is short, soak kombu for 20 minutes first. Once cooked, cut up and return to the dish. Kombu contains glutamic acid, a natural flavor enhancer. Like kelp, kombu has the ability to soften other foods that are cooked with it.

**Health Benefits:** Kombu contains enzymes that help to break down the raffinose sugars in beans (the cause of excessive gas and bloating), increasing digestibility. Kombu also acts as an antidote to excess sodium consumption and it is known to reduce blood cholesterol and hypertension. Kombu is high in iodine, potassium and calcium, as well as vitamins A and C.

#### Nori

(*Sea Lettuce, Green Laver*) Nori has a mild, nutty, salty-sweet taste. Best when roasted before using (pre-toasted nori is sold as "sushi nori"), wild nori is excellent crumbled into soups, grains, salads, pasta, and popcorn. Nori is also great as a table condiment either alone or with ginger. Nori, when sold in paper-thin flat sheets, is used for wrapping sushi rolls or for cutting into strips to use in soup. Sea lettuce, "green nori" that resembles lettuce, is excellent in soups, salads, and in rice and noodle dishes.

**Health Benefits:** Nori is 28% protein, more than sunflower seeds, lentils or wheat germ. It is also an excellent source of calcium, iron, manganese, fluoride, copper, and zinc. Of the sea vegetables, nori is one of the highest in vitamins B1, B2, B3, B6, B12 as well as vitamins A, C and E.

#### Wakame

A traditional addition to miso soup, this sweet-flavored and tender sea vegetable may be softened in water for only about 5-10 minutes before slivering into a green salad. Remove any stiff central rib before cutting and eating. Wakame goes well with land vegetables, especially cooked greens. It is particularly delicious when sauteed with onions. Lightly bake and crumble wakame for a mineral-rich condiment for brown rice and other grain dishes.

**Health Benefits:** Wakame has many of the same nutritional benefits of its close relative, kombu. It is especially rich in calcium and contains high levels of vitamins B and C.

### Nori Soup with Sheet Nori

#### Ingredients:

few drops of toasted sesame oil  
1 c. onion, cut into half moons  
few drops of shoyu or tamari  
1 c. fresh mushrooms, finely sliced  
5 c. water  
2 sheets of nori  
5 T. shoyu or tamari  
green onions, chopped to garnish

#### Directions:

Brush a deep pot with a small amount of sesame oil and heat. Add the onions and saute for 3 minutes on medium heat, adding a few drops of shoyu while sautéing. Add the mushrooms and sauté for a further 2-3 minutes. Add the water and bring to a boil. Break the nori sheets into small pieces and add to the soup. Simmer for 5 minutes. Add the shoyu and simmer for 1-2 minutes. Serve garnished with the chopped green onions. Serves 4-5.

### A SUPER FOOD

Since ancient times, sea vegetables have been appreciated as one of nature's most valuable food sources by coastal peoples from around the globe. Although their taste is distinctive and an acquired one for those with an uninitiated palate, sea vegetables are incredibly versatile and may be added to just about any dish.

**Soaking before cooking:** Remember that dried seaweeds will expand considerably upon soaking. Save the soaking water, strain it, and use for soup broth and vegetable stock.

**Storage:** Dried seaweeds, if stored in a cool, dry place, will keep for several years in an airtight container. If the seaweed does become damp, simply dry briefly in a low oven.

### HEALTH BENEFITS

- Although they are part of the plant kingdom, sea vegetables are a complete protein source and one of nature's richest sources of vegetable protein (up to 38%) and vitamin B12.
- Ounce for ounce sea vegetables are higher in vitamins and minerals than any other food group. They are particularly high in vitamins A, C, E, B1, B2, B6, and B12. Seaweed also contains a substance (ergosterol) that converts to vitamin D in the body.
- In addition to key nutrients, seaweeds provide us with carotene, chlorophyll, enzymes, and fiber.
- Seaweed's saltiness comes from a balanced, chelated combination of sodium, potassium, calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, iron, and a myriad of trace minerals found in the ocean.
- Because their chemical make-up is so similar to human blood, sea vegetables have a balancing, alkalizing effect on the blood.
- Sea vegetables are known for their ability to reduce cholesterol, remove metallic and radioactive elements from the body, and to prevent goiter.
- Seaweed also has antibiotic properties that have shown to be effective against penicillin-resistant bacteria.

Sources: *Recipes from an Ecological Kitchen* by Lorna Sass, *Whole Foods Companion* by Dianne Onstad, *Cooking with Sea Vegetables* by Peter and Montse Bradford and *Maine Coast Sea Vegetables Recipes*.

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### GLOSSARY

#### Agar Agar

(*Agar, Kantan*) Derived from red seaweed, this natural thickener is mainly used as a gelling agent in desserts, puddings, pie fillings, and aspics. Agar agar is a vegan alternative to animal-derived gelatin. It acts as a mild laxative, adding bulk without the calories. Use agar agar to replace gelatin as well as eggs and other thickening agents in baking. Add 2 T. of agar agar flakes per cup of simmering liquid to be gelled. If liquid contains citrus, add 3 T. Stir occasionally, until agar agar has dissolved. Allow about 1 hour gelling time at room temperature or 35 minutes in the refrigerator.

**Health Benefits:** Agar agar is a fine source of iodine, calcium, iron, phosphorus and vitamins.

#### Alaria

Alaria is very similar to the Japanese wakame. It is the perfect sea vegetable for soups and is delicious raw in salads, either pre-soaked or marinated. Cooking alaria for at least 20 minutes brings out its sweet mild taste and soft, chewy texture. Remove the fibrous central rib before eating. Dried or baked alaria may be added to soups or used as garnish.

**Health Benefits:** Alaria is comparable to whole sesame seeds in calcium content. Its vitamin A content is very high, comparable to spinach, parsley or turnip greens. Alaria is rich in iodine and bromine and is packed with B vitamins, especially B2, B6 and B12.

#### Arame

Usually found in long, thin string-like strands, this seaweed looks like hijiki, but has a mild, sweet taste. Arame is an excellent sea vegetable for those unfamiliar with the distinctive flavor of seaweeds.

To cook, soak for 5 minutes and then simmer for about 10 minutes. Sauté alone or blend with land vegetables, such as green onions and yams. Arame is good in salads, stir-fries, with rice and vegetables, or in a vinaigrette. Its light taste also blends well with tofu. Sea palm is a type of arame that resembles noodles. These fronds are good raw, sauteed or used in soups or salads.

**Health Benefits:** Arame is highly concentrated in iron, calcium and potassium, and is one of the richest sources of iodine. It is also a good source of protein. Along with kombu, kelp, and hijiki, arame is known for its ability to counteract high blood-pressure.

#### Dulse

Dulse is delicious as a raw snack with its distinctive, strong sea flavor as well as its rich taste and salty, spicy flair. It is great in soups, stews, chowders, salads and sandwiches. It goes very well with corn and potatoes. Dulse is a favorite with children and first-time eaters of sea vegetables. Pan fry dulse into tangy chips or bake them with melted cheese. Although dulse doesn't require cooking, it only takes 5 minutes to cook and the flavor will mellow. Dulse is great sprinkled over grain dishes and it combines well with onions.

**Health Benefits:** Dulse is approximately 22% protein, higher than chickpeas (garbanzo beans), almonds or whole sesame seeds. A handful (about 30g) offers more than 100% RDA of vitamin B6, iron and fluoride, as well as 66% RDA of vitamin B12. Dulse is relatively low in sodium, yet quite high in potassium, phosphorus, manganese, and iodine as well as vitamin A. Dulse is also a highly alkaline vegetable.

#### Hijiki

(*Hijicki, Hizicki*) This elegant strong-tasting seaweed is particularly good with onions and tofu as well as carrots and other root vegetables. It may also be added to stir-fries and noodle dishes. Hijiki sweetens considerably when cooked. To cook, first rinse and soak for 20 minutes. Then, rinse again before simmering for 30 minutes to 1 hour. Try dressing with cider vinegar, tamari and roasted sesame oil. For a cold salad, combine with tamari, sunflower seeds, cooked onions, celery and carrots.

**Health Benefits:** Of all the sea vegetables, hijiki is the richest in minerals and it has an abundance of trace elements. It is extremely high in calcium (gram for gram, about 14 times more than milk). In addition, hijiki is rich in iron as well as protein.

#### Irish Moss

(*Carrageen*) The thickening agent used in food products from cottage cheese to salad dressing, carrageen, comes from this seaweed. Carrageen is rich in minerals, especially iodine, and contains a good supply of vitamin A.

#### Kelp

Kelp is similar to Japanese kombu and is considered an all-around sea vegetable. With its natural glutamic acid, kelp cooks quickly and dissolves after about 20 minutes of simmering. Kelp may be roasted, pan-fried, pickled, marinated, boiled, etc. Kelp is often sold in a powdered form and is a flavorful seasoning that is a great mineral-rich salt alternative. Members of the kelp family include arame, kombu, Pacific Coast ocean ribbons and Wakame.

**Health Benefits:** Kelp is exceptionally high in major minerals, particularly calcium, potassium, magnesium, and iron. It is also rich in trace minerals, including manganese, copper, and zinc. One ounce of kelp provides the RDA of chromium, which helps regulate blood sugar. Once ounce also supplies the body with plenty of iodine, essential for thyroid functioning.

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