

THE HERITAGE SEAWEED COOKBOOKLET



A 15-MINUTE GUIDE TO
COOKING WITH SEAWEED

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Don't worry. Cooking with seaweed is easy.

Sure. There are a ton of great recipes out there. Buy a cookbook. Google it. Or don't. The fact is, getting seaweed into your diet can be as simple as you want to make it. That's because seaweed is an umami booster that pairs well with just about everything. It's really hard to mess it up. This short guide will get you cooking with it in just 15 minutes -- without a recipe.

Why should I cook with seaweed?

IT'S REEEALLY GOOD FOR YOU.

Minerals are seaweed's biggest nutritional benefit. With 10X the minerals of most vegetables, seaweed is notably high in iodine, potassium and iron, and has a broad spectrum of around 60 other minerals. Vitamins, essential amino acids, proteins and antioxidants are in there as well. Seaweed is also a well known anti-inflammatory agent and digestive aid. Oh, and it's where fish get all their DHA omega oil.

Consequently, regularly eating seaweed offers many health benefits. Some of these include thyroid regulation, cancer prevention, immune system support, cellular protection and increased resilience to harmful radiation, cardiovascular health, optimal cellular metabolism, healthy blood vessels and improved bone strength. A true superfood.

IT TASTES GOOD.

Do you like meat, soups, shellfish, smoked fish, eggs, cheese, tomatoes, mushrooms, soy sauce, green tea or nutritional yeast? These foods' umami (aka "savory") fla-

vor has a lot to do with that. Seaweeds have umami too. In fact, kombu (a type of kelp) is to thank for the discovery of umami in 1908 by Japanese scientist Kikunae Ikeda (umami means “delicious”). Foods with umami taste good, pair well together, lessen the need for salt, stimulate appetite, and contribute to a feeling of fullness.

IT'S LOCAL AND SUSTAINABLE.

Mainers have been wild-harvesting seaweed commercially for more than 100 years, and they continue to do so sustainably. That's why supply of certain Maine seaweeds is sometimes limited; our harvesters want to protect this great natural resource. It might cost a couple of dollars more, but when you buy your seaweed from a domestic harvester, you're helping to preserve traditional working waterfront jobs.

As interest in seaweed increases, we're now beginning to farm it in Maine as well. Simply put, farmed seaweed is probably the single-most sustainable food you can eat. Organic veggies (storage vessels for fresh water, a resource in dwindling supply) ain't got nothing on farmed seaweed. Think about this: Farmed seaweed requires no land, no fresh water, no fertilizers, and no pesticides. It's truly a zero-input crop. And during the growing season, a kelp farm creates habitat for marine life, sequesters carbon, creates oxygen, and reverses ocean acidification.

What can I do with it?

The easiest thing to do? Add flakes to anything, yes, anything. Slightly more advanced? Put cut-up pieces of whole-leaf seaweed in soups, stews, beans, stir-fries and salads. Then relax with some seaweed tea or a kelp cocktail.

Where do I get quality seaweed?

As always, support your local harvesters and farmers. If you're in the United States, that means buying seaweed from your nearest coast. There's no need to buy imported Asian seaweed as there's usually a local equivalent. One exception is Nori sheets for sushi. An equivalent seaweed species (Laver) does grow here, but the US doesn't have the processing capability. If you do buy seaweed from farther afield, just ask yourself what you really know about the water quality, sustainable harvesting or growing practices, working conditions, and the carbon footprint behind its journey to your grocery store shelf. Chances are the answers to at least some of these questions aren't so great.

Other FAQs

What the heck is it? Seaweed is often marketed as “sea vegetables,” but they're actually not even plants. Seaweeds are algae, its own separate kingdom of organisms.

How do I store it? As long as you keep seaweed in an airtight container out of the sunlight, you're good to go. A zip-top bag in the cupboard works for most people. Dulse and nori have a shelf life of around two years. Irish moss, kombu and wakame can last for even longer. Note that many domestic harvesters and growers slow-dry their product, which results in a live-enzyme food. This results in a flavor that may mature over time.

What's that white stuff on the outside? That's just natural salt, minerals and sugars coming to the surface. Don't worry about it, and definitely don't rinse it off! One caveat: Dulse occasionally develops more substantial deposits

of white powder in one of its nooks and crannies. Such a concentration of minerals is extremely bitter. Simply brush most of it off and you're good to go.

Can I harvest my own? You certainly can, though it's not something I necessarily recommend. First, don't eat anything you find lying on the beach. Its holdfast (similar to a root) has come loose so it's probably in a state of decay. Plus, wrack (washed-up seaweed) is essential for seabirds and dune-building. Second, some of the tastier species (Dulse, Kombu, Wakame) grow at depths or in areas that can be hard to access easily. Finally, if you decide to forage, don't yank up the entire thing. Use scissors or a blade to trim off the upper portion, ensuring that the organism will grow back. Fully dry it within 24 hours by hanging it up or putting it in a low-temperature oven.

Common types of North Atlantic seaweed

We've developed an easy way to think about the 7 most common seaweeds in order to help you understand them instantly: Dulse, Irish Moss, Kombu, Sea Lettuce, Sugar Kelp and Wakame. We've taken each seaweed and matched it with a super-familiar ingredient that you probably already understand deeply. These are labeled as each species' "spirit ingredient."

This should allow you the confidence to start cooking with these seaweeds today, without necessarily needing a recipe. It's not that these seaweeds taste or cook exactly like their spirit ingredient. Think of it more like a metaphor. For instance, if the spirit ingredient is "spinach," you can assume that it works just about anywhere you'd use spinach: soups, stews, pasta, salad, stir-frys and omelets.

Dulse

SPIRIT INGREDIENT: BACON

Dulse (*Palmaria palmata*) is a reddish-purple seaweed that's soft, chewy, salty and quite savory. The most popular way to eat it is the traditional way, snacking on it like chips straight from the bag. It's been famously compared to bacon--a bit of an imaginative leap, but it's probably the closest thing to bacon of any naturally occurring, unprocessed non-animal food, particularly if smoked and fried.

Salad topping. Chop small pieces, use small leaves or add flakes to any salad, including fruit salads.

Sandwiches. Use a couple leaves in a vegetarian BLT sandwich (people call that a DLT).

Soups, stews & chowder. Use scissors to cut small pieces. Dulse is very thin and tender, so pieces will dissolve when cooked for a long time.

Smoothies. Flakes are a popular ingredient in many smoothie recipes.

Compound butter. Dulse butter is the secret ingredient at some of Portland's (and NYC's) best restaurants. See COMPOUND BUTTER recipe elsewhere in this guide.

Hors d'oeuvres. Wrap a leaf around a dab of goat cheese, a grape or an apple.

Condiment. Roast in the oven at 275°F for 4 minutes or until crispy. Remove and crumble into flakes. Store in an airtight container and sprinkle on veggies, rice, pasta, meat, eggs, popcorn, pizza and other cheese dishes.

Irish Moss

SPIRIT INGREDIENT: GELATIN

Irish Moss (*Chondrus crispus*) is a dark purple seaweed that grows in small, bushy clumps about the size of a small fist. Historically, it's been used to make everything from puddings to toothpaste to beer. A powerful thickener and emulsifier, it's a vegan, gluten-free, corn-free alternative to gelatin, flour and corn starch.

When boiled, it releases a powerful gelling agent called carageenan. Word to the wise: It only takes a small amount of Irish Moss to gel something. Overdo it and you may end up with a solid brick! Depending on the recipe, ratios are 1-part Irish moss to anywhere from 4 to 16 parts liquid.

A note about sourcing: Sun-bleached Irish Moss, recognizable for its golden color, is popular because the aroma and flavor are more mild. I prefer mine unbleached because it's more nutritious. Yes, the aroma of a fresh bag may remind you of wet dog, but in anything but a simple vanilla pudding, the smell and taste aren't noticeable.

Pudding, ice cream & other desserts. Blancmange, a simple European-style pudding, is one example.

Soups, Broths & Gravies. Thicken and up the nutrients without using gelatin, bones or other animal products.

Smoothies. "Irish Moss" is the name of a popular Jamaican drink featuring the seaweed and coconut milk, plus flavorings like cinnamon, nutmeg and vanilla.

Skincare gel. Easy to make in a few minutes--just soak, boil and blend or strain--Irish moss gel is probably the nicest thing you can put on your skin.

Kombu

SPIRIT INGREDIENT: BAY LEAF

Kombu or konbu (*Laminaria digitata*) is a variety of kelp seaweed that's rich in savory umami. It forms the base of dashi, the foundational stock used to make miso broth and many other Japanese dishes.

Like a bay leaf, Kombu can be a subtle but essential flavor-enhancing addition to many dishes. Unlike a bay leaf, Kombu softens enough to be eaten when cooked for a long period. My rule of thumb: If something's cooking in liquid, Kombu will probably make it taste better.

Miso soup broth and dashi. Simply add a strip of Kombu and bring to a light simmer. See MISO SOUP recipe.

Soups, stews, chowders, rice, pasta, mixed vegetables. Use a strip if you want to easily remove it before serving. Otherwise, use scissors to snip small pieces. Make sure to simmer at least 40 minutes to become tender.

Beans. Add a strip to beans at the beginning of cooking to improve digestibility, thicken texture, and enrich the overall flavor. In effect, cooking beans with kombu achieves the same result as soaking them overnight (Search: Cook's Illustrated + Kombu + beans).

Nori or Laver

SPIRIT INGREDIENT: MUSHROOMS

North American Laver (*Porphyra umbilicalis*) is commonly called Nori because it's essentially identical to Japanese Nori (*Porphyra tenera*), the seaweed that's shredded, pressed, roasted and trimmed to make sushi wrappings and those uber-popular "seaweed snacks." Same taste.

In its whole-leaf form, its akin to mushrooms--a little nutty, meaty, dense and sometimes even a bit rubbery (in a good way). And also like mushrooms, it's packed with umami.

Soups & stews. Crumble or use scissors or a knife to cut small pieces.

Stir-frys, omelets & scrambles. Use scissors to cut tiny pieces. Add with butter/oil and saute for a minute or two before adding eggs or stir-fry ingredients to pan. Nori will be quite chewy in egg dishes that have short cooking times.

Pizza topping. Top pizza with small pieces and cook.

Condiment. Roast in the oven for a few minutes until the flavor is nutty and it becomes crispy. Remove and crumble into flakes. Store in an airtight container and sprinkle on . . . anything: veggies, rice, pasta, meat, eggs, popcorn, pizza and other cheese dishes.

Sea Lettuce

SPIRIT INGREDIENTS: SPINACH, WHITE TRUFFLE

Stretchy and almost neon-green when fresh, Sea Lettuce (*Ulva lactuca*) turns dark-green, delicate and brittle when dried. It has a strong, pungent aroma similar to white truffle and a somewhat bitter, vegetal taste not unlike spinach.

Soups, stews & pasta. Crumble flakes into just about anything.

Infused oils & salad dressings. Add flakes to olive oil and store for several weeks. Or add to a salad dressing as you would any herb.

Omelets, scrambles & stir-frys. Crumble directly into dishes while cooking.

Condiment. At the table, crumble flakes atop any vegetable, meat, fish, rice or pasta dish.

Sugar Kelp

SPIRIT INGREDIENTS: KOMBU & WAKAME

Sugar Kelp (*Saccharina latissima*) has a savory, umami flavor similar to kombu, with some pieces more like wakame in delicacy of texture. This makes it suitable as a substitute for either seaweed in many cases. I love to roast the thinner pieces (275°F for 4 minutes) to bring out their nutty flavor and then store them to crumble on things later. Or grind roasted sugar kelp into granules to use as a salt replacement (especially in chocolate chip cookies and other baked goods, mmm).

See entries for KOMBU, WAKAME.

Wakame

SPIRIT INGREDIENT: SPINACH

A staple ingredient in miso soup, Wakame (*Alaria esculenta*) is one of the most versatile edible seaweeds. With a mild flavor and delicate texture, it readily absorbs the flavors of dressings, sauces, and other ingredients with which it is paired. While you can use it just about anywhere you'd use spinach (and beyond), unlike spinach, it's sweet, not bitter.

Cooking time is about 20 minutes at a low simmer. However, be aware that the dense midrib (while the same taste and nutrition of the 'leaf') cooks more slowly, so it tends to be more chewy. I enjoy that, but if you don't, one option is to trim out the midrib (like collard greens) post-cooking and save these "kelp noodles" to cook in another dish later. To roast, oven-bake at 275°F for 4 minutes or dry-roast in a skillet at Medium until crispy.

Soups, stews & pasta. Use scissors to cut small pieces. Add with other long-cooking vegetables.

Seaweed salad. Gently simmer, then chill, chop and dress. Save leftover water to use as broth or liquid for cooking rice or pasta. See SEAWEED SALAD recipe.

Steamed greens. Gently simmer or steam, chop and top with butter. Save leftover water to use as broth or liquid for cooking rice or pasta.

Omelets, scrambles & stir-frys. Use scissors to cut tiny pieces. Add with butter/oil and saute before adding eggs or stir-fry ingredients to pan. Wakame will be quite chewy in egg dishes that have short cooking times.

Compound butter. See COMPOUND BUTTER recipe.

Recipes

So just because you don't need a recipe doesn't mean they're not helpful. Here are 3 classics to get you started. And don't sleep on the seaweed butter: It's magic.

Miso Soup

YIELD: MAKES 4 SERVINGS

FOR THE DASHI

- 4 cups water
- 1 (4-inch) piece dried Kombu
- ½ cup bonito flakes (leave out if vegetarian)

FOR THE BROTH

- 3 tablespoons miso paste
- ½ (12-ounce) package tofu, cubed
- 1 teaspoon dried Wakame flakes (or 1 6-inch leaf snipped into small pieces)
- ¼ cup chopped green onions

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat water in a large pot over low heat. Add Kombu and cook until it just begins to simmer. Add bonito flakes and stir to combine. Remove pot from heat and let sit, uncovered, for 5 minutes. Strain out Kombu and bonito and compost those. (You just made dashi!)
2. Remove 1 cup warmed dashi to a small bowl and whisk in miso paste.
3. Pour miso mixture back into the pot with remaining dashi. (If desired, strain out miso bits.) Return liquid to stovetop over medium heat.
4. Add tofu and Wakame, stirring to combine. Stir until until warmed through. Serve garnished with onions.

Seaweed Salad

YIELD: MAKES 4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- 2 ounces Wakame (or Sugar Kelp)
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup or honey
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds

DIRECTIONS

1. Gently simmer Wakame for 20 minutes or until tender.
2. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, whisk together the oil, vinegar and maple syrup.
3. When Wakame is cooked, drain and chill until cool.
4. Dice the Wakame into bite-size pieces, arrange in bowls, add dressing and sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Compound Butter

YIELD: MAKES 1 CUP

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ ounce (or ⅓ cup) Dulse, Sea Lettuce or Wakame flakes
- 2 (8-ounce) sticks unsalted butter

DIRECTIONS

1. Roast seaweed until crisp (skillet Low; oven 275°F).
2. Process into flakes with a food processor (dulse and sea lettuce can be crumble by hand).
3. Cut butter into small slices and blend with seaweed using a food processor (about 30 seconds) or by hand with a stiff spoon, until well blended.

Onward!

So there you go. We hope you're inspired you to start cooking with seaweed. It's easier than you think. You really don't need a recipe. The key, really, is getting your hands on some quality local seaweed--and not being afraid to experiment. Have fun!



PHOTO BY JENNIFER BLACK

JOSH ROGERS is the owner of Heritage Seaweed. In Portland, Maine, it's the western hemisphere's first all-things-seaweed shop. He's also the creator of Cup of Sea tea and the founder of Seaweed Week, an annual restaurant week celebrating Maine's kelp harvest. These have been featured by Martha Stewart, The New York Times, Lonely Planet, Forbes, Prevention, Sierra Club Magazine and HGTV.

Born and raised in Maine, Josh spent 12 years in New York City, working as a restaurant guide editor at Zagat and on dining and travel content strategy at Google.

His favorite seaweed is Dulse.

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