



SEA VEGETABLES

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.

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 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.

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.

STORAGE

Dried sea vegetables, if stored in a cool, dry place, will keep for several years in an airtight container. If the seaweed does become damp, simply dry it briefly in an oven set at a low temperature.

PRECAUTIONS:

Therapeutic use of sea vegetables is not recommended in hyperthyroidism.

A Note about Potential Radiation Contamination:

There is conflicting information about whether or not radiation in sea vegetables should be a concern for consumers. Some people eat sea vegetables because of their ability to absorb and eliminate radiation, heavy metals and other toxins in the body. Since the tsunami/earthquake in March, 2011 near Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactors and the subsequent dumping of contaminated water into the ocean, many consumers have been concerned about consuming sea vegetables in case they absorb radiation from the ocean. Some sea vegetable producers are testing products for radiation contamination; Sea Snax, Rising Tide and Eden Foods have performed such tests and their data shows no radiation contamination in their products.

RECIPES:

Nori Wrap

Mix and match your favorite ingredients and wrap them in a sheet of nori!

- roasted sweet potatoes, carrots, winter squash, beets
- sprouts: broccoli, radish, bean, sunflower
- greens: lettuce, spinach, arugula
- fresh herbs: parsley, basil, dill, thyme, mint
- toasted sesame seeds, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, nuts
- avocado, tomato, marinated cucumbers
- toasted sesame oil, mirin and/or soy sauce, coconut aminos, leftover rice, quinoa or couscous
- fresh grated carrots, daikon, beets, kohlrabi
- sautéed summer squash, eggplant or onions
- marinated/seasoned tofu or tempeh cut into planks

Kelp Spice Mix

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| ½ c. parsley | 2 T. onion flakes |
| ¼ c. kelp powder | 3 t. garlic granules |
| ¼ c. thyme | ½ t. sea salt (optional) |
| 2 T. tarragon | ½ t. pepper |

Make your own Nori Chips

Cut nori sheets into snack size pieces and place in a single layer on baking sheet. Spray or brush on oil of your choice. Sprinkle with your favorite seasoning (sesame seeds, sesame oil, garlic, cayenne, sea salt, etc.) Place into a 250° oven for 10-15 minutes or until the nori has crisped up. Allow to cool. Experiment with seasonings, oils and cooking times and temperature to make your own creation.

Sources:

Recipes from an Ecological Kitchen by Lorna Sass
Whole Foods Companion by Dianne Onstad
Starwest Botanicals and *Cooking with Sea Vegetables* by Peter and Montse Bradford

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GLOSSARY

Agar Agar (Agar, Kanten)

Derived from red seaweed, this natural thickener is mainly used as a vegan alternative to animal-derived gelatin in desserts, puddings, pie fillings and aspics. Use agar agar to replace gelatin or as a substitute for eggs and other thickening agents in baking. To gel 2 cups of liquid, you need 1 tsp. of agar powder, or 2 T. of agar flakes, soaked in the liquid for several minutes, then simmer and stir until dissolved. Allow 1 hour gelling time at room temperature. The liquid will gel as it cools. It does not need to be strained. Agar agar is high in fiber and low in calories.

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 seaweed. 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. Sea palm is a type of arame that resembles noodles. These fronds are good raw, sautéed or used in soups or salads. Along with kombu, kelp, and hijiki, arame is known for its ability to counteract high blood-pressure.

Nori

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.

Dulse

Dulse is delicious as a raw snack with its distinctive, strong sea flavor as well as its rich taste and salty, spicy flair. Dulse is a favorite with children and first-time eaters of sea vegetables. 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 combines well with onions.

Irish Moss

Irish Moss is a curly red, purple or yellow-green plant found clinging to submerged rocks. It is most commonly used as a thickener. To gel, soak 1 c. Irish moss in 4 c. spring water and blend in a high-powered blender until creamy. Carageenan is a commercial thickener derived from Irish moss, but the intense heat and processing used to make it ultimately depletes it of its nutritional benefits.

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. 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.

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 mineral-rich salt alternative. Members of the kelp family include arame, bladderwrack, kombu, Pacific Coast ocean ribbons and wakame.

Bladderwrack

A form of kelp that has been used medicinally for centuries. Used mainly for the stimulation of the thyroid gland as a treatment for obesity and cellulite. It has a reputation in the relief of rheumatism and rheumatoid arthritis and may be used both internally and externally for inflamed joints.

Kombu

Kombu is particularly good in beans, soups, stews and brown rice; add a 4-6 inch strip during cooking. When cooking time is short, soak kombu for 20 minutes first. Once cooked, chop and return to the dish. Kombu contains glutamic acid, a natural flavor enhancer. Kombu has the ability to soften other foods that are cooked with it. Kombu contains enzymes that help to break down the raffinose sugars in beans (the cause of excessive gas and bloating), increasing digestibility.

Wakame

A traditional addition to miso soup, this tender sea vegetable may be softened in water for 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 sautéed with onions. Lightly bake and crumble wakame for a mineral-rich condiment on brown rice and other grain dishes.