

Edible Seaweeds - Foraging

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Our unique environment in Jersey is host to a huge variety of wild edibles. Some of the great wild edibles we have come from our shores. As the tide retracts each day a treasure trove of flavours and health benefits are awaiting us. Saying that our environment is also very fragile and any over-use can result in damage and disappearance so etiquette must also be adhered to. The law in seaweed harvesting in Jersey goes back at least 100 years and states that seaweed may only be harvested from the rocks from 1st February to the end of April. Otherwise any seaweed naturally washing up on the beach is fair game. Between the months of legal harvest scissors should be used and only the top one third should be taken leaving the rest to recover.

Here is a list of 5 from the variety of edible seaweeds available in Jersey:



Gut Weed *Ulva Intestinalis*

This seaweed does not have a very inviting name but this is still a great coastal edible. As with all seaweeds it is recommended to give them a good wash in fresh water when collected but I find that this seaweed should be cleaned a little more than most. This is the seaweed you would have seen most in Chinese restaurants but it seems nowadays what you get in the restaurant tends to be fried cabbage rather than the seaweed. You can deep fry the seaweed for a nice crispy texture or it can just as easily be boiled or steamed.



Laver *Porphyra Umbilicalis*

Also known as Nori seaweed has been traditionally used by the Japanese to make papery edible sheets for Sushi. This seaweed has also had a long history throughout Great Britain. It was used in soups and in a Welsh recipe known as Laver Bread. This is highly nutritious seaweed containing high amounts of protein, iron, B vitamins, C, A, D and iodine. It is said that for every 100grams of laver seaweed foraged 25grams will be pure protein that will satisfy the diet of vegans and vegetarians.



Oar weed Breton Kombu *Laminaria Digitata*

Part of the Kelp family and found on big low tides or washed up on the beach after stormy seas. It grows up to 3 metres long and is attached by a long stipe to rocks. It has been traditionally used in Japanese dishes and has become highly prized in other places around the world. The reason for this is its high content of glutamic acid which is referred to as 'Umami' or the fifth taste. This Umami when added to foods in the cooking process has been found to significantly enhance the flavour, making it more Moorish.



Sea Lettuce *Ulva Lactuca*

This seaweed is known as 'Green Nori' a tougher version of Laver seaweed used in Sushi. It is also high in Protein, Iron, and a variety of vitamins and minerals. It can be eaten raw in salads, fried, boiled or dried and has a very agreeable taste. I personally prefer eating it after the cooking process as otherwise it can be quite tough. This seaweed reacts powerfully to any influx of nitrates usually linked to agricultural run-off. In the North of France huge amounts washed up on the beaches and once rotting it releases Hydrogen Sulphide, a toxic gas, which has been responsible for killing various people and animals.



Velvet Horn *Codium Tomentosum*

This amazing little seaweed was used to scare me as a child with adults telling me it was called 'Dead Man's Fingers'. The green tubular fingers were very convincing to a young child believing these were the fingers of lost sailors or pirates at sea growing from the rocks. Eventually I learnt about the edible qualities of this seaweed and I when I cut a piece I noticed a thick gel oozing from it. I found out that this oily gel is high in omega-3 and omega-6 essential fatty acids and great for our overall health. I prefer to eat this seaweed raw and think it has a flavour of oysters. The texture is quite furry but can be softened slightly through lightly boiling or steaming.



Serrated Wrack *Fucus Serratus*

This seaweed is very common in our waters and very easy to identify as it is the only wrack to have and cosmetics. However, I do rate this seaweed as a great edible and can be fun to cook outdoors. I say outdoors as I love to deep fry very quickly and watch the brown colouration turn to bright green. This cooking method softens the normally tough exterior and releases a more pleasant flavour. The only thing to watch out for is that it spits and jumps about when it is added to hot oil so caution should be taken and that's why I mention it should be cooked outside rather than decorating your kitchen walls with oil.

The iodine content in this seaweed is high and it shares the same properties as that of Bladder Wrack. This high iodine content and other trace minerals are now been used to combat obesity as the iodine has been found to stimulate the thyroid and the thyroid in turn stimulates the metabolism. These seaweeds are also used to balance hormones in the body.