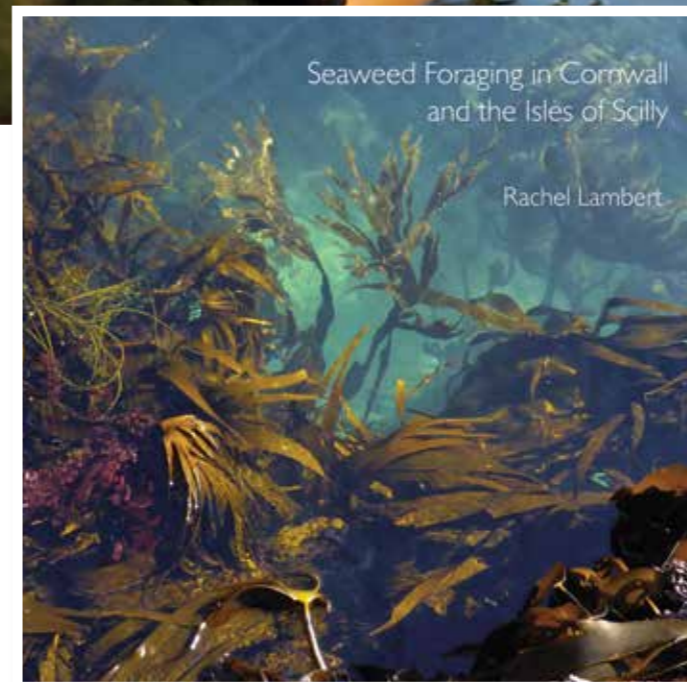




# SEAWEED THE CORNISH SUPERFOOD

Forager extraordinaire, Rachel Lambert, knows a thing or two about picking out the best of wild Cornwall produce. Here, she delves into the up and coming superfood that is seaweed, showing you where you can find it and what you can do with it.





Seaweeds are amazing; along with seagrasses they produce over half the oxygen in our atmosphere, absorb CO2 and provide living habitats for a wide variety of species to forage in, feed off, spawn and nurse in. They are a refuge from predators for fish and invertebrates, assisting coastal protection by dissipating wave energy and capturing sediments.

Here in Cornwall we have fantastic access to the sea and over 400 species of seaweed off our shores, out of around 640 species in total in the UK. We are on a level with Ireland, Scotland and Wales in our variety of seaweeds and richer than the South East of England.

Seaweeds, which are technically marine algae (and not weeds at all), are also known in some parts of the world as sea vegetables for they are indeed a fantastic food and source of nutrition. They contain carbohydrate, protein, iron, vitamin C, B vitamins (to name a few) and a fantastic range of minerals and trace elements. All seaweeds are edible (with the exception of the Desmarestia family, which grow mainly in deep sea areas, and can cause stomach upsets), making them safer to forage than land plants as well as offering a diverse range of flavours, textures and versatility.

While the topic of seaweeds and eating them has become increasingly popular in the UK over the last year or so, there still remain just a handful of good books on the subject, and most people still seem in the dark with what to do with them. Knowing seaweeds are 'good for us' and translating that into tasty meals

seem, at best, distant cousins.

Indeed, many of you may be dubious or down right averse to eating seaweeds, well now there's a book that may very well change your mind. Rachel Lambert's newest book; *Seaweed Foraging in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly* is informative, exciting and packed with recipes to drool over and photos to match. With recipes such as Sea Lettuce Pizza, Spicy Apple Turnovers with Sugar Kelp and Carrageen Ice Cream, this guide slowly dissolves the boundaries between seaweeds and 'normal' food. In actual fact the author respectfully challenges anyone who claims they don't like seaweeds, asserting that there is a seaweed flavour, texture or recipe for everyone.

Influenced by traditional recipes from our native isles, as well as Asian and Oriental cooking, recipes also include non-native seaweeds which have become abundant and naturalised here. Such a seaweed is Wireweed (*Sargassum muticum*), originally from Japan, which has a light and pleasant taste and a good range of vitamin and minerals, in particular potassium, magnesium and calcium and is a great aid for weight loss too. As a non-native seaweed, wireweed can potentially take-over rockpools, and impinge on the growth of other seaweeds – thus eating this seaweed is a fantastic solution for the environment and us. Why not try Rachel's Smoky Stir Fry (recipe from the book) and experience for yourself;



## Seaweed Stir Fry

Keep it simple, so the flavours come through. A perfect side dish or main with egg-fried rice.

Ingredients (serves 4)

For egg-fried rice (optional)

250 g brown basmati rice

1 egg, lightly beaten

1 tbsp sesame oil

1 tbsp vegetable or sunflower oil

Smoky Stir Fry

15 g dried wireweed (chopped or ground) or 45 g fresh

150 ml boiled water

1 bunch spring onions or 1 onion

1 clove of garlic

300 g carrots

100 g chard/spinach or sea spinach, chopped

1 tbs sunflower oil

1 heaped tsp Cornish smoked sea salt

100 g fresh peas (shelled)

Black pepper to taste

For the egg fried rice; In a large pan, bring to the boil 600 ml of water. Add the rice, and turn down the heat before putting on the lid and simmering for 25 minutes. Once cooked, turn off the heat, but do not remove the lid.

Mix together the egg and sesame oil, and heat the oil in a large saucepan, until almost smoking. Add the cooked rice and cook for 3-4 minutes, stirring regularly. Briskly stir in the egg mix with a wooden spoon, leave for 30 seconds and take off the heat. Cover and keep warm while you make the stir fry.

For the smoky stir-fry; If using dried wireweed, cover with the 150 ml of boiled water and leave for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, finely chop the spring onions and garlic and slice the carrots lengthways into matchsticks. Cut the stalks off the chard, spinach or sea spinach. Heat the oil in a large frying pan or wok and, when hot, add the onion and garlic and sweat for 2-3 minutes over a medium heat. Stir in the carrot sticks, stems of chard, spinach or sea spinach and salt; fry for about 4 minutes, then add the rehydrated wireweed and water, vegetable leaves and the peas. Cook for 10 minutes, stirring regularly until the carrots are soft. Adjust with black pepper then serve hot with the rice.

Book: *Seaweed Foraging in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly*, by Rachel Lambert.

Covering 16 seaweeds, including tips on; where, parts to use, season, nutrition, getting the ID right, suggested recipes and uses and additional tips, complete with step by step recipes and over 90 photographs. Guidelines on legal responsibilities, how to harvest in a sustainable manner and the importance of keeping seaweeds intact in the face of climate change, are also discussed.

Retail price: £6.95, available across the region and from Rachel's website; [www.wildwalks-southwest.co.uk](http://www.wildwalks-southwest.co.uk)

Or, why not search out Rachel's first pocket guide, include's coastal, hedgerow, grassland plants, as well as five seaweeds; *Wild Food Foraging in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly* by Rachel Lambert (£6.95)