

Super seaweed

Cornwall's countryside is packed with natural foodstuffs to delight the pickiest of foragers - now a new award-winning book by master forager Rachel Lambert brings a taste of the delights of our native seaweeds

FORAGING has become the hipster byword in culinary adventure – what could be better than growing your own? How about heading out in to the wilds of Cornwall to find and forage the star ingredients to your menu.

Master forager Rachel Lambert has been building up her foraging expertise since her early twenties when she moved to rural Devon. Now living in Penzance, this year she celebrates her tenth anniversary running foraging courses and teaching the art of finding foods in the wild. She learned about foraging in Europe and Asia and in rural England. But it wasn't always so. Having grown up in the city, her foraging experience was limited – like many of us – to blackberry picking. 'It's still foraging,' she tells me. 'But there are hundreds of things you can forage – I probably know about 200 of those, and I teach a much smaller number on my courses.'

Having published her first book, *Wild Food Foraging in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly* in 2015, her second book *Seaweed Foraging in Cornwall and the*

Isles of Scilly has been awarded a food book 'Oscar'. Gourmand World Cookbook Awards 2017, in the category Fish.

The book focuses on 16 varieties of edible seaweeds found around the coasts of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, and is both a detailed guide to their identification and nutritional qualities and an inspirational recipe book, offering 32 step-by-step recipes, and featuring more than 90 stunning photographs.

'Everything that's cultivated today has a wild origin – and the things we forage are the unadulterated versions,' explains Rachel. 'We used to have a much broader diet, and much of that has been forgotten.' Foraging also brings new flavours to our palate offering new and exiting contrasts.

So how does Rachel eat her foraged goodies? 'My most recent meal was bread with Alexander seeds which have a spicy-bitter flavour and a wild *salsa verde* featuring seasonal seaweeds.

Her courses have become immensely



Author Rachel Lambert has spent more than 20 years working in environmental education and community nutrition and has been teaching wild food foraging in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly since 2007



Sea kelp: we know it better as a beauty ingredient but it is also a tasty addition to many meals



popular to both locals and visitors to Cornwall, looking to include a foodie adventure in their visit beyond a visit to Rick Stein's Seafood Restaurant.

'It's a fantastic way of enjoying and appreciating and learning about the environment, as well as discovering new flavours,' she says of her courses which attract a wide range of people, from older couples, to young families. 'Foraging is an area that's growing and it's becoming increasingly trendy and people are becoming more aware of it.'

And as our love of experimenting on foodstuffs has grown, coastal foods like seaweed have increasingly found their way on to our plates – think of Samphire, sea spinach and sea lettuce. At this time of year (the seasonal aspect to land foraging extends to the sea's bounty) you'll find Pepper Dulse – better known as the black seaweed we love to pop – Bladder Wrack and Laver (in abundance at this time of year).

'Seaweed is still something quite alien to people – they don't know what to do ▶

'This book is an intimate voyage to the beaches and the sea. It is well written and useful; it is a model for books that could be done similarly in other regions and coasts in many countries.'



Egg Wrack is a popular foraged seaweed featured in Rachel Lambert's book *Seaweed Foraging in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly* which has won a 2017 Gourmand World Cookbook Award

with it,' she says. 'It doesn't all taste the same – there's a real range of flavours, textures and uses. Some works in stocks and broths, some are really good as condiments, some for baking, and even some for setting things like panacotta.'

Seaweeds are also incredibly rich in minerals and vitamins. 'We would have used these for thousands of years,' she adds. 'You can use them for salsa, breads, ice creams and hummus to noodles and soups.' And if foraging sounds like too much hard work – you can get it ready-foraged. 'I really rate the Cornish Seaweed Company,' she says.

The Gourmand World Cookbook Awards are regarded as the Oscars of food and drink books, with 89 categories for food and wine books. In 2016, books from 209 countries competed for the awards. Previous winners in English include Rick Stein and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall. 'This book is an intimate voyage to the beaches and the sea,' says Edouard Cointreau, President of the Jury. 'It is well written, and useful. It is a model for books that could be done similarly in other regions and coasts in many countries.'

Seaweed Foraging in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly now goes through to the final round of the Gourmand Awards, and will be judged against books in other languages for The Best in the World. The results will be announced in Shanghai, China, in May. ♦

Seaweed Foraging in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, by Rachel Lambert, £6.95 from local shops, delis and her website Rachel runs Wild Food Foraging courses, her next take place on 12 February at St Agnes



and a seaweed foraging course at Gyllyngvase in Falmouth on 27 February. To find out more and buy her books visit wildwalks-southwest.co.uk.

LAVER/NORI PORPHYRA SPECIES

A wonderful translucent seaweed, each species of porphyra has slightly different eating qualities and tastes.

How to identify it

A fine, translucent seaweed varying from purple, purple/brown to olive green

Can feel like thin plastic (it has a slight bounce when pulled) and look like sheets of plastic stretched over rocks when dried

Generally between 20-30cm in length. Can be attached at one end, or in the middle

Where: Lower to mid shore, up to 15 m subtidal. On rocks, sand as well as growing off other seaweed species. All species can be found across the region

Parts to Use: All, keeping holdfast intact and never stripping a whole rock of laver

Season: Thrives well during Winter, till and including Spring

Nutritional: High in protein, and a good range of vitamins and minerals, including B, C, E and beta-carotene

Suggested recipes and uses: Use in laver bread, as a vegetable added to soups, stews, quiche, bread or even sweet dishes such as molasses cookies. Use raw laver in similar ways; torn into pieces for soups or stews, or dried and ground into sweet or savoury baking, or in quick sushi.

TIPS: Wash really thoroughly (several times) if picking from sandy beaches. Submerge in a container of water, allow the sand to settle to the bottom and rinse again. Can use as a vegetable rather than just a condiment. I think raw laver is just as tasty as cooked.



Swirled Laver Bread Loaf

Technically traditional laver bread refers to the black pulp of cooked laver, which makes this a tasty laver bread bread (makes 1 loaf)

Ingredients

Laver (fresh or dried)*
400 g white flour
100 g spelt or wholemeal flour
1 tsp dried active yeast
½ tsp sea salt
1 dsp vegetable oil
150 g cooked laver bread
1 tsp honey

200 ml warm water
Little extra flour for rolling

*I recommend cooking batches of at least 250g fresh laver to justify the energy used to cook it. Cooked laver freezes well in an airtight container or sealed, for later use.

Method

To make laver bread: If using fresh laver rinse thoroughly in several changes of water to remove any sand or debris. If using dried, re-hydrate for 10 minutes and use the same water for cooking. Place in a saucepan and cover with water - the seaweed will float to the

surface so be careful not to add too much water and attempt to submerge it completely. The goal is for the laver to absorb all the water while cooking. Bring to the boil, cover and simmer for about three hours, or until the seaweed breaks down into a pulp. Check and stir regularly to avoid boiling dry, adding a little extra water if



Chicken Broth with Bladder Wrack

A lightly flavoured seaweed soup. Use homemade chicken stock for an added depth of wholesomeness

(serves 4)

Ingredients

For the chicken stock (makes about 2 litres)

- 1-2 raw or cooked chicken carcasses
- 1 onion, peeled and chopped
- 1 carrot, washed and sliced
- Bunch of parsley stalks
- 2 sticks of celery with leaves, or equivalent in Alexanders, chopped
- 1 tsp mixed dried herbs
- 20 g dried bladder wrack (60 g fresh)
- 2 litres water

For the broth

- 1.8 litres chicken stock
- 4-cm length fresh root ginger, peeled and finely chopped
- *5 g dried bladder wrack tips, sliced, or whole if small/tender enough, rehydrated
- 6-8 spring onions, trimmed
- 100 g rice vermicelli noodles
- 100 g shredded green cabbage
- 400 g shredded cooked chicken
- Soy sauce or fish sauce (optional)
- Black pepper, to taste

Method

For the stock: Chop up the carcasses as much as possible. Put all the ingredients in a saucepan, cover with two litres of water, bring to the boil, and simmer, covered, for 3 hours. Strain and use the stock as follows (this also freezes well for later use).

For the broth: Bring the stock to the boil; add the ginger and bladder wrack, and simmer, covered, for 30 minutes. If using bought/premade stock, remove three-quarters of the bladder wrack

now. Add the rice noodles according to packet instructions, followed by the shredded cabbage and finely chopped spring onion in the last minute. Pour over the cooked chicken, reheat gently, and flavour with soy sauce or fish sauce if liked. Serve immediately in warmed bowls.

***If using bought/pre-made chicken stock, add an extra 15g dried bladder wrack, removing excess pieces of seaweed before serving.**

required. Liquidise the final pulp to ensure it's broken down into slightly smaller pieces.

For the swirled laver bread loaf: Oil a one-kilo loaf tin and put aside. Mix together the flour, yeast, salt, oil and 75 g of laver bread in a large bowl. Stir in and dissolve the honey in the water and gradually stir into the flour mix until you have a workable ball of dough, neither too sticky or too dry. Knead the dough for

10 minutes or until the dough starts to spring back. Place in a bowl, cover and leave in a warm place for 30-60 minutes or until doubled in size.

Break the dough into two equal pieces, sprinkle a small amount of flour onto a clean surface and roll each piece of dough out into approximately 30 x 10 cm lengths. Spoon the remaining laver bread along the middle of each strip (keep 2cm free from

the sides and ends). Carefully lift up one end of a dough and start to roll it up, lifting as you go, rather than pushing. Pinch the edges as you go to ensure the laver stays inside, also pinch the sides once complete and place roll at one end of the tin. Repeat with the second length, filling the tin. Next preheat the oven at 190°C. Cover and leave to rise for a further 30 minutes before baking for 40/45 minutes. Remove from tin, allow to cool and enjoy.

