

How to Eat Dulse Seaweed - Bon Appétit

Seaweed, Aisle 4: Why This Bacon-Flavored Superfood Could Be the Next Kale



Dried dulse with sesame.

Credit: Stephen Ward/Oregon State University

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If your seaweed consumption is limited to the miso soup and seaweed salad from the corner takeout sushi joint, you need to meet **dulse**. Researchers are betting you'll soon be downing this seaweed with an enthusiasm normally reserved for bacon because, well, it *tastes like bacon*.

"Fresh, raw dulse has a nice minerality and tastes very much like the ocean," says **Jason Ball**, a research chef who works extensively with dulse at Oregon State University's [Food Innovation Center](#) in Portland. "But when you pan-fry it, it takes on a lot of those smoky and savory characteristics that are very, very similar to bacon."

Ball is [experimenting with ways](#) to incorporate dulse (rhymes with “pulse”) into commercial food products that could be on store shelves as soon as this fall. But more on that later—first, the basics.



Fresh dulse resembles a leafy, red lettuce. Photo: Stephen Ward/Oregon State University

Dulse 101

Dulse is a seaweed—a large category of edible saltwater plants and algae that also includes species such as nori and kelp. Like all edible seaweed, dulse provides a wealth of fiber and protein, and it’s also rich in vitamins, trace minerals, healthy fatty acids, and antioxidants. It resembles a leafy, red lettuce, and grows wild on the northern Atlantic and Pacific coasts, where it’s typically harvested during low tide from early summer to early fall. Unless you know someone who harvests wild dulse, you likely won’t be able to buy it fresh—once harvested, it’s normally dried immediately for maximum freshness before it’s packaged. You can find dried dulse products from brands like [Maine Coast Sea Vegetables](#) at well-stocked grocery stores such as Whole Foods. Look for whole-leaf and flaked dulse, dulse powder, and seasoning mixes.

Wild dulse has [long been a staple of diets](#) in parts of northern Europe like Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. But the seaweed can also be cultivated, and professor **Chris Langdon** at OSU is [doing just that](#) with a patented strain of dulse that doesn’t depend on the tides or seasons and is growable year-round (though it’s not commercially available yet).



Clockwise, from top left: Ball's dulse rice crackers, smoked dulse peanut brittle, dulse trail mix, and dried dulse with sesame. Photo: Stephen Ward/Oregon State University

The Next Kale?

Ball, a [Nordic Food Lab](#) alum, has been cooking with dulse delivered from Langdon's facilities for months, experimenting with all kinds of ways to make the nutrient-dense sea vegetable tantalizing to even the most seaweed-averse eaters. Some of his more out-there creations included a sourdough bread with dulse substituted for salt; beer brewed with dried dulse instead of hops, an instant ramen with a dulse spice packet, a trail mix with dulse-and-banana fruit leather, smoked dulse popcorn brittle. Oh, and let's not forget about the dulse ice cream. In taste tests, Ball says the big winners were a puffed dulse rice cracker ("it's like a vegetarian *chicharrón*") and a dulse salad dressing made with soy sauce and rice wine vinegar.

"My dad is this old guy from the Midwest who only eats meat and potatoes," Ball says. "If I give him a handful of dulse, he's just gonna look at me like I'm crazy. But if I give him chips, something he's familiar with, they could be a gateway."

Ball is currently working with a contractor to commercialize the dulse salad dressing and get it on shelves at a Portland food retailer by the middle of fall. Meanwhile, Langdon, who currently cultivates about 20 to 30 pounds of dulse weekly, is looking into moving some of the operations to eastern Oregon to up the production to 100 pounds a week.