

Savory seaweed

A wholesome snack

By **Kate Parham Kordsmeier**

EATING SEAWEED MAY sound a bit strange, but not only have you likely eaten it before (it's that paper-like wrapping around most sushi rolls and is commonly used as a thickener in candies, milks, desserts, jelly and other foods), but seaweed has been in diets around the world since people began eating, says Crystal Maderia, Costco member, cookbook author and chef-owner of Kismet, a restaurant in Montpelier, Vermont.

"It's just like a land vegetable, except seaweed—often called sea vegetables—grows in water," adds Julie Morris, author of the series of *Superfood* cookbooks, including *Superfood Snacks: 100 Delicious, Energizing & Nutrient-Dense Recipes* (Sterling, 2015; not available at Costco). Edible algae, seaweed comes in red, green and brown varieties known as nori, dulse, sea lettuce, kombu, wakame or kelp.

In many Asian cultures, it's eaten as a side dish, served as a complement to rice, used as a wrapper for sushi rolls, and added to soups and salads as an alternative to lettuce. Likewise, many European countries, namely Nordic cultures and the UK, have also relied on seaweed to create many of their unique dishes, including laverbread, snacks, puddings, drinks and oatmeals.

Cooking and storing seaweed

So what does seaweed taste like? "It's a combination of salty—slightly oceanic—and umami [the fifth flavor that makes things like meat and mushrooms so savory]," explains Morris, who loves adding seaweed to grain dishes like rice pilaf for an extra flavor boost. "When you add seaweed to a recipe, there's that certain something that makes it something you can't stop eating."

Seaweed is incredibly versatile, and can be enjoyed in myriad ways. Maderia often grinds roasted seaweed into a powder in her food processor to use as a seasoning in sauces and marinades, and even as a baking ingredient. Try adding a tablespoon of powdered seaweed to baked goods,

like pizza dough, carrot cake or gingerbread, she suggests: "It just disappears."

She also uses her homemade seaweed powder as a marinade for meat to help soften it. Same goes for adding seaweed to beans and other difficult-to-digest vegetables.

Try adding roasted seaweed to nuts and spices for a healthy snack, or simply eat it plain, all on its own.

Roasted seaweed can last a long time, but in order to keep the product crispy and fresh, it's best to store it in a sealed container in a cool, dry, dark area.

Costco's roasted seaweed

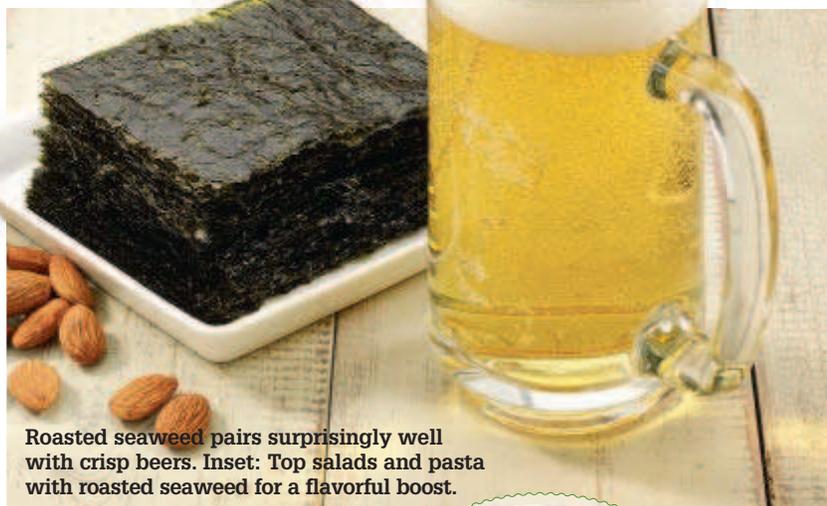
Costco recently began offering its own Kirkland Signature™ line of roasted seaweed. The high-quality product is sourced from South Korean farms using traditional techniques, which allow the seaweed to go through a more natural growth process.

"Our seaweed is grown slowly in the cold waters of a UNESCO biosphere reserve area, ensuring clean, uncontaminated waters," says Gigi Jataas, assistant foods buyer for Costco. "When you bite into the Kirkland Signature seaweed, you'll notice a lighter, crispier texture with a more savory taste."

Kristen Hayes, Costco foods buyer, adds, "We season our non-organic product with canola oil, sesame oil and salt. And we've recently become certified with the Non-GMO Project, which verifies that our seasoning ingredients are not genetically modified."

"It's also important to note the 'Winter Harvest' specification on our packaging," says Kristen. "The best conditions to grow seaweed involve mud flats, large tide variants and very cold waters with high salinity. We harvest in winter because the water conditions create a superior-quality product and flavor." 🇺🇸

Kate Parham Kordsmeier (kateparhamkordsmeier.com) is a food and travel writer, recipe developer and cookbook author.



Roasted seaweed pairs surprisingly well with crisp beers. Inset: Top salads and pasta with roasted seaweed for a flavorful boost.



The Costco Connection

Look for Kirkland Signature Roasted Seasoned Seaweed in your local warehouse. An organic version is available in select locations.