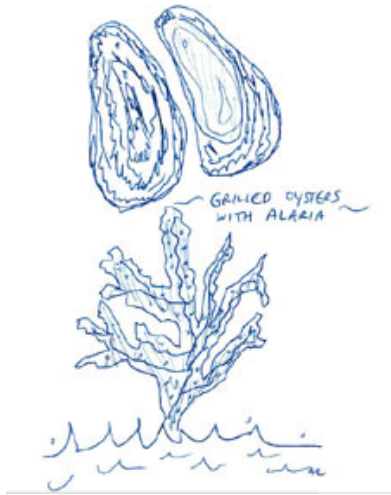


Amy Rosen's Dish: Seaweed - bake it, grill it and slather it on your face!

Posted: July 23, 2008, 11:07 AM by Brad Frenette

[Dish](#), [Amy Rosen](#)



Not everyone can boast, “I’m the single largest private owner of rubber boots on Vancouver Island,” but Diane Bernard can. And there’s a reason for that. Bernard, a.k.a. The Seaweed Lady (and creator of Sea Flora Skin Care — fantastic stuff), is a third-generation seaweed harvester. “The ocean is my garden,” she tells me on a sunny afternoon in Sooke, where the water is a metre deep and stretches as far as the eye can see. Bernard takes groups out on splashy “seaweed tours” — the reason for all of those boots. She’s a licensed harvester for the 650 species of local wild coastal seaweed here, the most diverse collection in the world.

“Between spring and the autumnal equinox is seaweed season,” she says, holding out some smooth alaria for me to touch. “After Sept. 21, it’s over.” In other words, that’s when the quality drops off, and it’s no longer suitable for eating, though local farmers make good use of it as fertilizer. But while it’s in season, she takes advantage of the tonnage at her feet. “Some of it is in excess of 500 years old,” she says. “We all came from the ocean, you know.”

And now the ocean is giving back. Super-rich in vitamins and minerals, seaweed is all fibre and no fat. All sorts of seaweed is used in the kitchen: seaweed lettuce, in oils and sauces; kombu, in stocks and soups; alaria can sub for lasagna noodles, or you can wrap barbecued oysters in it. “Seaweed dovetails beautifully with seafood,” says The Seaweed Lady. “Best of all, none are poisonous in the Pacific Northwest.”

GRILLED OYSTERS WRAPPED IN ALARIA

(Makes 1 dozen)

- 1 dozen medium West Coast oysters
- 1 frond fresh or rehydrated alaria
- Tabasco sauce (optional)

1. When making this appetizer with dried alaria, Diane Bernard soaks the fronds in water for 15 to 20 minutes to rehydrate them. Fresh alaria comes covered in salt, which just needs to be rinsed off. Preheat the grill to medium.
2. Shuck 12 oysters and transfer to a small bowl, reserving the shells. Make sure shells are scrubbed and rinsed.
3. Cut twelve 1-inch x 5-inch strips from a frond of prepared alaria, and wrap a strip around each oyster, then return them to their shells.
4. Put oysters (in shells) on the preheated grill and cook until steaming, about five minutes. Arrange on a platter and top each oyster with a dash of Tabasco if you wish. Serve hot or chilled.

– Amy Rosen, National Post