

It might not look appealing but it's said seaweed benefits the

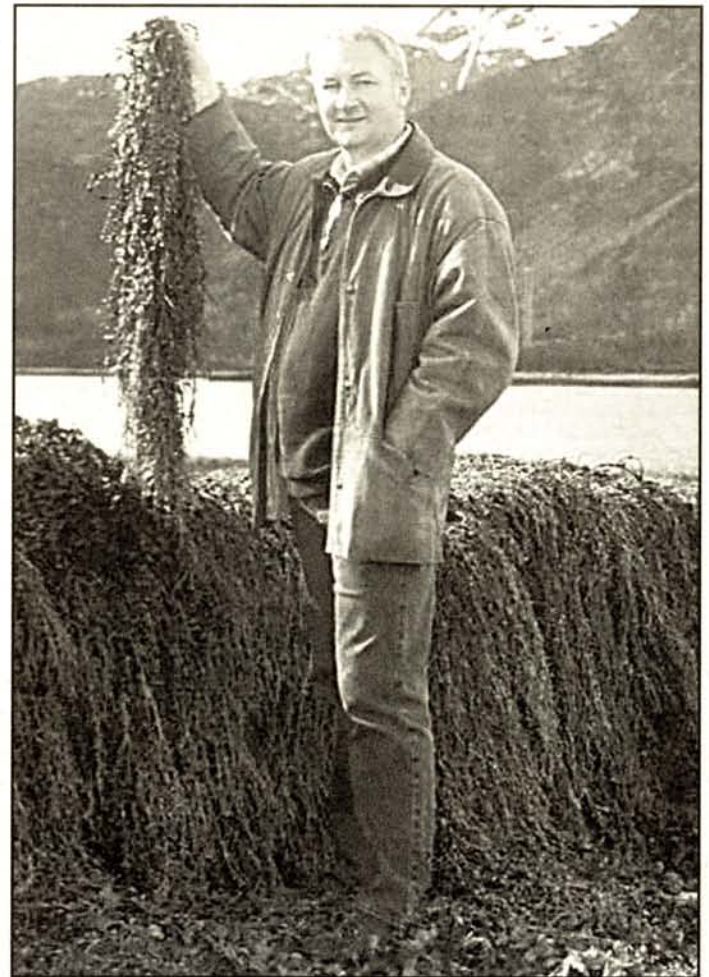


Why I believe eating this weed helps your skin glow

SEAWEED is worshipped by a host of celebrity devotees. Be it an algae moisturiser, re-energising sea spa glow or kelp nutritional supplements, seaweed has taken the beauty world by storm. Naomi Campbell is said to adore her seaweed body wrap, Victoria Beckham reputedly cannot live without her Creme de la Mer face cream and Sarah Jessica Parker is said to have a penchant for gooey kelp face masks. And one Sussex man believes it's best eaten for a fabulous skin. So is seaweed really a modern miracle for the body? **CARRIE BUCKLE** reports.

PEOPLE have believed in the benefits of the sea on mind, body and spirit for centuries. Now seaweed mania has reached an all-time high as celebrities and the public alike strive to harness its benefits in the quest for a youthful, radiant skin. There is a dizzying myriad of seaweed wraps, face packs, shower gels and hydrotherapy massages. Products include Creme de la Mer, which retails at about £100 a tub, and is hailed as "a must" by celebrities including Jennifer Lopez, Madonna, Sharon Stone, Heather Locklear and Courtney Cox. The cream, developed by a NASA scientist to heal his own skin burns, uses seaweed because of its healing properties. It claims to lock in the skin's water and provide continuous rehydration. Seaweed products have also infiltrated the high street stores with most beauty retailers now offering some form of marine extract line. At Lush, one of the current bestsellers is a sea vegetable soap. It

USING HER LOAF: Actress Catherine Zeta Jones is reputed to tuck in to Welsh lavabread which contains seaweed



RICH PICKINGS: Simon Ranger with Norway's Rolls-Royce of seaweed

is a sea vegetable soap. It contains sea salt crystals, Arame seaweed and compressed oil of seaweed and is supposed to soften and stimulate the skin.

But what are the real skin benefits of the fruits of the sea?

While some fork out hundreds of pounds on creams containing kelp, one man believes we should actually be eating the wonder weed.

For Simon Ranger, who runs a company called Seagreens from his home in Handcross, West Sussex, seaweed provides all the minerals and nutrients the skin could wish for.

**LEADER
OF THE
PACK**



His company offers food products using seaweed harvested in pure arctic waters off the remote Lofoten Islands in Norway. The plants flourish in a bay surrounded by snow-capped mountains and the sea is protected by ice from November to April.

In the four years since setting up Seagreens, he has seen an explosion in the vogue for these vegetables of the ocean.

Mr Ranger, 51, said: "Seaweed is the most mineral-rich food found in nature.

"Most people think all the nutrients of the earth are found in the soil. They imagine the minerals go down through the rocks into the sea, back up into the clouds and then rain down on the land. But when moisture rises from the sea it does not take all the minerals with it.

"The land is actually getting less moisture rich because the earth's minerals stay in the sea. Seaweed absorbs all these nutrients."

He said it was the optimum balance of nutrients in seaweed which rehydrate skin, rather than adding water. But for him, the most effective way of reaping the benefits is by adding seaweed to the diet.

Mr Ranger said: "Seaweed can work wonders on the skin and I am not ruling out using it in creams. But it is important that it gets to all cells of the body for it to fulfil its potential.

"You can sprinkle it on food, use it in baking or just take it in a capsule. It tastes deliciously nutty."

He compared the chemical composition in seaweed to the saline solution which surrounds babies in the womb.

He said: "Seaweed has made a huge difference to my skin. I inherited dry hands from my father but since I started taking seaweed capsules three years ago I no longer suffer from this. I have also not had a cold for two years.

"There is a tremendous tradition of using seaweed for the skin especially by communities living by the sea. But there is also a lot of research to back this up."

A similarity between human plasma and sea water is thought to have been discovered by scientist Claude Bernard in the 19th Century.

More recent trials have shown the mineral-rich algae to not only be good for skin but also hair, nails, blood circulation and weight loss.

When asked whether he thought seaweed creams, as favoured by celebrities, really worked, Mr Ranger said: "It depends how much seaweed is in the products as to their effectiveness.

"I know of mothers who make a paste from pure seaweed granules which they apply on babies with eczema. Other people add hot water to granules to make a wonderful face pack. There is no doubt this benefits the skin.

"I would say if a product was less than 40 per cent seaweed people may be wasting their time.

"I think it would be far more beneficial for the skin if you took two seaweed capsules a day for ten months instead of raiding the bank to buy a cream which may only have traces of seaweed."

For Mr Ranger, who regularly visits the Lofoten Islands to follow the progress of the seaweed he uses in his products, quality is of utmost importance.

He said: "We only use the Rolls-Royce of seaweed. These remarkable ocean vegetables grow abundantly in the cold, crystal clear waters of the Arctic Ocean."

He currently only produces a small range of products but has spent the last three years developing a seaweed soap to be launched in the spring.

Asked why seaweed had infiltrated both the beauty industry and our diets now, Mr Ranger said: "This is largely due to the increased popularity of Japanese food in recent years.

"I think people are just becoming more aware of how the ocean is nature's most complete nutrient store.

"Seaweed detoxifies, hydrates,

nourishes and balances. It is the most perfect source of everything our skin could wish for."

Seagreens products, which are all organic, include wild seaweed granules at £3.99, table condiment at £4.99 and capsules at £12.99. They are sold in most natural food stores.

Sussex stockists include: GNC (General Nutrition Centre), Churchill Square, Brighton; Infinity Foods, North Street, Brighton; Health & Diet Centre, South Street, Chichester; Tulleys Farm Shop, Turners Hill Road, Crawley; Cornerweighs, Caudle Street, Henfield; Natural Way, Piries Place/Carfax, Horsham; Steyning Health Foods, High Street, Steyning and Health Flair, Montague Street, Worthing.

WEEDING

OUT THE

BEST: Simon Ranger with some of his company's products





WAVE OF ENTHUSIASM: Kerry Taylor uses a seaweed face mask and has found her skin has improved since she moved to the coast from the city

I can see the difference living by the sea

SINCE moving from London a year ago to live by the sea, Kerry Taylor has begun using all natural skin products including a Decleor face mask which contains extract of seaweed.

It promises to provide instant relief for dehydrated skin and counteract the drying effects of external forces including central heating and harsh winds. Kerrv. 26. an assistant

psychologist, said: "It has definitely made a difference and my skin has felt more nourished.

"I think it is really important to protect your skin, particularly when living by the sea in the winter."

Kerry, who lives in Brighton, described how her skin gradually went from being dull to glowing with health.

She said: "When I studied in London my skin felt dirty and my pores were clogged up.

"I was never completely happy with my skin and beauticians always used to palm off different treatments which they guaranteed would work. They never did.

"But since I started using completely natural products, and moved by the sea, my

skin feels ten times better.

"It is not just the seaweed mask but a combination of changes."

Kerry agreed coastal winds did take their toll on the skin but said the pros outweighed the cons.

She believes the move from the city to the seaside was the best thing she could do in terms of her body and mind.

She said: "I make a real effort to protect my skin from the harsh winds because I am concerned about the ageing effects.

"But living by the sea has real benefits for both my skin and state of mind.

"I feel a lot more relaxed living in Brighton. I don't know how I would feel if I had to move away from the sea now."

**OF THE
PACK:**
Actress
Meg
Ryan



Ocean vegetable loved by famous faces

HERE are some of the seaweed treatments and foods the stars are said to find sensational.

SEAWEED FACE PACKS

Sex And The City star Sarah Jessica Parker swears by her seaweed face pack. Meanwhile, Meg Ryan, Liv Tyler and Naomi Campbell all frequent Mario Badescu's day spa in New York for the ultimate seaweed facial.

SEAWEED AFTERSHAVE GEL

The thought of

leaning over to kiss someone and being faced with the pungent aroma of seaweed might not fill you with lust.

But Jennifer Aniston doesn't seem to mind because Brad Pitt is reputed to enjoy a squirt of Enessa seaweed aftershave gel.

CREME DE LA MER

At a cool £100 a pot, this face cream laced with seaweed is not cheap. Yet it has become one of the most talked about products in the beauty industry.

It now commands a cult following from women hailed as the most beautiful in the world,

including Jennifer Lopez, Madonna, Sharon Stone, Heather Locklear and Courtney Cox.

SEAWEED BODY WRAPS

This treatment promises to detoxify and reduce cellulite – so that is Naomi Campbell's secret. Other enthusiasts include Julia Roberts, Emma Thompson, Uma Thurman, Michelle Pfeifer, Barbra Streisand and Michelle Pfeifer.

THALASSOTHERAPY

This treatment, using seawater and seaweed, has cultivated a huge following from royalty, supermodels and film stars. The list of celebs hankering after that youthful radiance includes Liz Taylor, Naomi

Campbell, Mel Gibson, Courtney Love and Charlize Theron.

SEAWEED FOOD

Japanese sushi, where rolls are often coated in seaweed, has long been favoured by a host of celebrities including Cameron Diaz and Geri Halliwell.

But now more and more stars, keen to stay trim, are incorporating seaweed into their diet.

The waif-like Calista Flockhart has been spotted tucking into seaweed salads while Catherine Zeta Jones delights in Welsh lavabread made from the ocean vegetables.