

# Ocean flavour scene

*CARINA COOPER feels a yearning for salt on her cheeks and seaweed on her table*

I am a sucker for the alpha-male type who can wield a machete, shoot a gun and spear a fish. I once went on a fishing trip with such a man off the east coast of Australia. As he loaded up the Boston Whaler, I noticed that he packed a bottle of extra-virgin olive oil and a lemon, but no other food. We arrived at a reef, whereupon he dived into the sea with his harpoon. Before too long, he came back with a glistening silver fish pierced through on the arrow of his weapon. We made our way to a deserted beach and, while he scaled and gutted the fish, I did my bit, collecting driftwood for kindling. As the fire started to burn and I reclined – so enjoying all this domestic work being done by a man – he disappeared again, this time returning with some seaweed. He made a tube of it, and stuffed the fish inside, placing it gently among the burning embers of the fire. Ten minutes later, he removed the charred package and cut the fish free. We drizzled lemon juice and olive oil over the skin and ate probably the most delicious fish I've ever tasted. The seaweed had protected the fish, enabling it to steam, but the iodine from the seaweed had seeped into the flesh, adding considerably to the flavour. It's a technique that the Maoris of New Zealand have employed from time immemorial.

There are thousands of seaweed varieties and only one, lyngbya, is known to be toxic to man. Seaweed is an incredibly healthy food: kelp, for instance, contains the entire range of B vitamins, including B12, which is

not found in any land plants. Seawater and human blood both contain many of the same minerals found in seaweed, and in very similar concentrations, so it really should come as no surprise that we feel so good splashing about in or beneath the waves.

WILD SEA-BASS STUFFED WITH  
QUAILS EGGS, ARAME AND PARSLEY  
Serves four

Arame is a seaweed that grows along Japan's Pacific coast; it has a sweet, delicate flavour, with a delightfully soft, chewy texture. This recipe produces an unusual combination of flavours and textures, and is perfect for a spring lunch or dinner.

*1 wild sea-bass (about 1kg), scaled and gutted*

*2 tbsps dried arame*

*3 quail's eggs*

*1 shallot*

*1 bunch Italian flat-leaf parsley*

*Extra-virgin olive oil*

*Maldon sea salt*

Preheat the oven to 175°C/gas mark 4. Soak the arame in mineral water for 15 minutes, drain and finely chop. Remove the fish from the fridge at least 20 minutes before you intend to cook it; wash it and pat it dry with kitchen paper. Boil the quail's eggs for about five minutes, and then peel and finely chop them; also, finely chop the parsley and the shallot. Place the eggs, arame, shallots and a dessertspoon of parsley in a mixing bowl, and pour in a couple of dessertspoons of olive oil and a generous pinch of salt. Combine all the

ingredients well. Grease the bottom of a roasting pan with olive oil. Lay the fish in it, and stuff it with the arame and egg mixture. Close the fish as well as you can. Brush the skin with olive oil and sprinkle generously with salt. Bake in the oven for about 20 to 25 minutes or until the flesh feels tender when prodded with a fork and has gone from opaque to white. Remove the fish to a serving dish and present it to your expectant guests immediately with a salad of lettuce dressed in green olive oil and lemon.

SEAWEED TIPS

HIJAKI is another Japanese seaweed that would work well with this recipe. You can find seaweeds in health-food stores and Japanese food shops; in London, go to Arigato, 48–50 Brewer Street, London W1 (020 7287 1722).

CLEARSPRING ([www.clearspring.co.uk](http://www.clearspring.co.uk)) distributes many different varieties of seaweed, all harvested in clean waters.

SEAGREENS ([www.seagreens.com](http://www.seagreens.com)) makes nutrient supplements from wild organic seaweed that is collected in crystal-clear Arctic waters. It also has organic wild-wrack granules for cooking and seasoning.

For details of SEAWEED CULINARY TOURS of Vancouver Island, Canada, and beauty products made with seaweed, visit [www.outercostseaweeds.com](http://www.outercostseaweeds.com). □