

Deep delight

TABLE TALK

SEAWEED IN OXFORD

Given the distance we are from the sea edible seaweed and Oxford may seem the most unlikely of combinations. Nevertheless, there is a link between this product our city.

And as seaweed is now back in favour with the Western world, both as a vegetable and vitamin supplement, having been overlooked by the masses since the Industrial Revolution. So perhaps now is the right time to explore its potential.

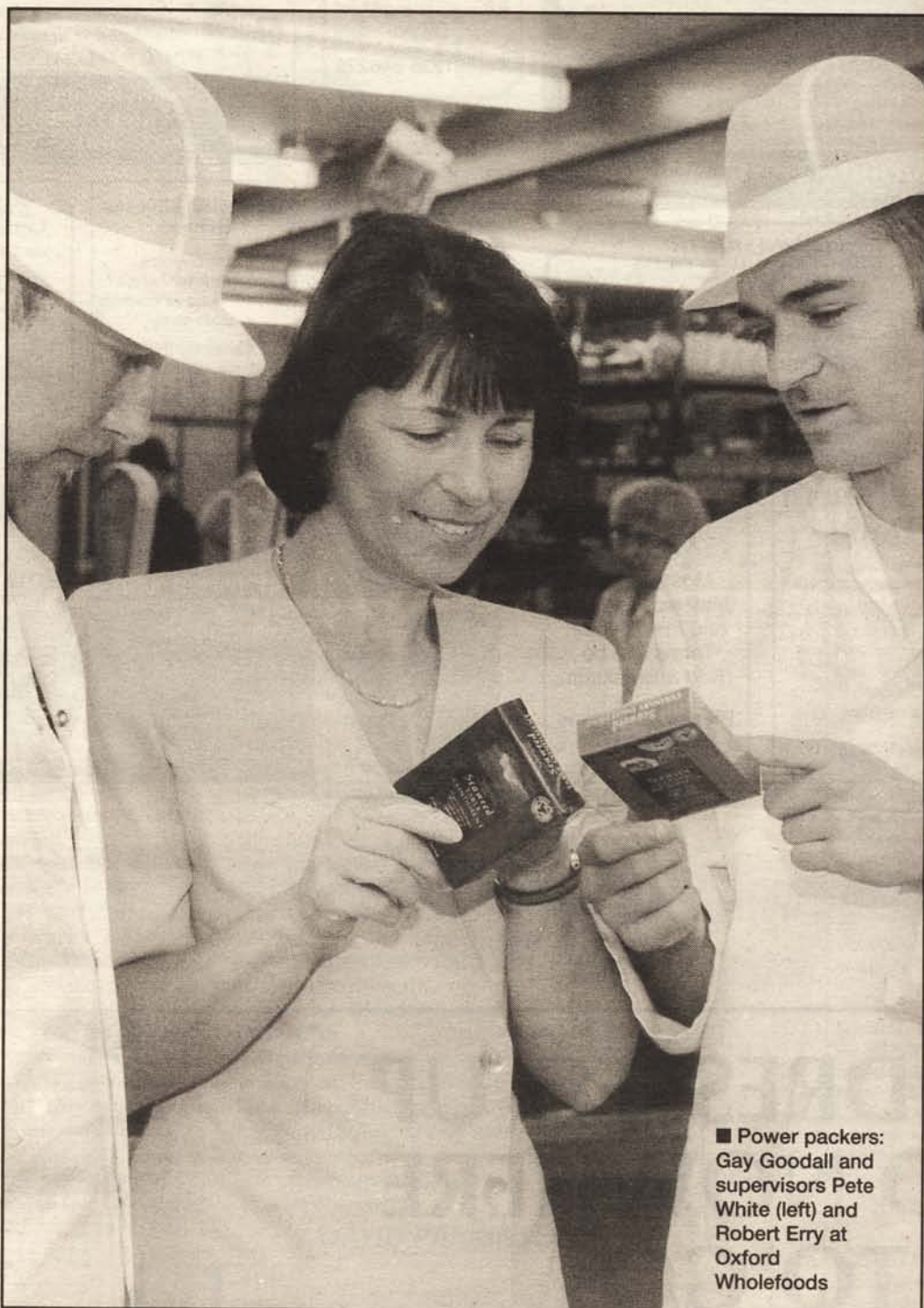
Seagreens, a new London-based company, is now processing seaweed as both a culinary ingredient and a table condiment.

Despite the distance, managing director Simon Ranger has contracted Oxford Wholefoods, a company based in Osney Mead (a stone's throw from *The Oxford Times* office) to pack these products.

Oxford Wholefoods is a commercially-based company set up in 1990 to help rehabilitate, train and develop the abilities of those with special needs. Currently it employs 30 workers and seven supervisors to pack foodstuffs brought in from all over the world for superstores, retail outlets and caterers.

Now Seagreens products, which were launched this week, are included in that number, much to the delight of Gay Goodall who runs Oxford Wholefoods.

Explaining the implications of this exciting new contract she said: "Because Seagreens have to be both weighed and packed into bags and then fitted boxes which have to be covered with shrink wrap, packaging these products offers exciting new challenges to the workforce."



■ Power packers: Gay Goodall and supervisors Pete White (left) and Robert Erry at Oxford Wholefoods

She added that work at Oxford Wholefoods is thorough but proceeds at a much slower pace than in other establishments, since each weighing and packing task is part of the learning process.

"Some of the client workers manage to master each of the tasks quite quickly, gaining great confidence in the process; others take a little longer, sometimes only mastering one task.

"But regardless of their level of achievements it gives them the dignity of labour and prepares them for further work."

Seagreens Culinary Ingredient is a mix of organic wild wrack and dulse, two particularly fine seaweeds gathered off the Norwegian coast which have been dried and coarsely ground to enable them to be added to a recipe during preparation.

It's a splendid way of putting extra nutrients into a dish, while infusing the taste of the sea and a subtle nuttiness into a recipe too.

It certainly makes a very tasty addition to home baked bread, pizza base and even crepes.

Simon explained that it was particularly good for kids: "By adding five grams to something like a pizza base, you are adding loads of extra nutritional value."

It can also tackle the well-known side effects of baked beans.

"If you add the Culinary Ingredient to baked beans, the minerals in seaweed will help to balance the protein and oils in the beans and break down their tough fibres which then increases their digestibility.

"Less wind!"

HELEN PEACOCKE

FACTS ABOUT SEAWEED

▼ Seaweed was being described as a delicacy fit to set before a king and prized for its nutritional content by the Chinese sage Sze Teu as early as 600BC.

▼ The Greeks began collecting seaweed around 45BC to feed to their cattle as they believed this would prolong their lives.

▼ Seaweed has featured as an integral part of the Japanese cuisine for centuries.

▼ Traditional western seaweed recipes include Welsh laverbread, oatmeal covered breakfast cakes and carragheen puddings from Ireland.

▼ Supermarkets which sell seaweed products include: Tesco, Sainsbury and Waitrose.

TELLY TALK: Read Augarde On The Box

RECIPE

TOAST SKAGEN (pronounced skargen) (Serves 4 main courses, 6 starters or 18 hors d'oeuvres)



This is a contemporary Swedish seafood platter contributed to Seagreens range by Jonas Castenfors, Stockholm, Sweden.

By sprinkling the ground Seagreens Table Condiment lightly over the finished dish, you ensure that the flavour of the sea comes through in every bite.

The idea comes from the Seagreens Recipe Collection.

YOU WILL NEED:

- 2 large ripe avocado
- Half a sweet onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 tspns Seagreens culinary ingredient
- Three quarters pound (340g) cooked peeled tiger prawns
- Quarter poun, (100g) Creme Fraiche
- Small bunch fresh parsley-chopped
- Few sprigs fresh parsley as garnish
- 150g black caviar or lumpfish caviar
- 4 thick slices of white bread
- Seagreens table condiment

METHOD:

- Peel and chop the avocado into small bite size chunks
- Peel and finely chop the onion and garlic
- Rinse and place prawns in a large mixing bowl
- Mix avocado, onion garlic and Seagreens Culinary Ingredient
- Add Creme Fraiche until a loaded spoonful of the mixture stands up in the spoon.
- Lightly toast the bread slices, set out on four dinner plates
- Spoon dollops of the mixture on each toast without compressing.
- Grind Seagreens Table Condiment lightly over surface.
- Garnish with parsley and caviar.
- Enjoy!