

Scientists in Oregon develop bacon-flavored seaweed

PORTLAND (AP) — What grows quickly, is packed with protein, has twice the nutritional value of kale and tastes like bacon?

The answer, according to scientists at Oregon State University (OSU), is a new strain of seaweed they recently patented.

Dulse is a form of edible seaweed that grows wild along the Pacific and Atlantic coastlines. It's harvested and commonly used by people in dried form as a cooking ingredient or nutritional supplement.

But OSU researchers say the variety they've developed can be farmed and eaten fresh, with the potential for a new industry for Oregon.

Scientists have been trying to develop a new strain of the seaweed for more than 15 years. Their original goal was to create a super-food for commercially grown abalone, a mollusk prized in Asia.

The strain of dulse they came up with, which looks like translucent red lettuce, is a great source of minerals, vitamins and antioxidants, not to mention protein. The abalone grew exceedingly quickly when fed the dulse, and an abalone operation in Hawaii is now using the seaweed on a commercial scale.

But after a product development team at OSU's Food Innovation Center created new foods with the dulse, researchers began to think

humans might benefit a lot more.

Among the most promising foods created were a dulse-based rice cracker and salad dressing. And bacon-tasting strips, which are fried like regular bacon to bring out the flavor.

The research team received a grant from the Oregon Department of Agriculture to explore dulse as a "specialty crop" — the first time seaweed had made the list. The team brought on a culinary research chef to further refine recipes and products.

Several Portland-area chefs are now testing the sea "vegetable" in its raw or cooked form. And MBA students at OSU are preparing a marketing plan for a new line of dulse-based specialty foods and exploring the potential for a new aquaculture industry.

There are no commercial operations that grow dulse for human consumption in the U.S. and chefs say fresh, high-quality seaweed is hard to come by.

"The dulse grows using a water recirculation system," said OSU researcher Chris Langdon, who developed the strain. "Theoretically, you could create an industry in eastern Oregon almost as easily as you could along the coast with a bit of supplementation. You just need a modest amount of seawater and some sunshine."

HISTORY: New location offers long-term prospects

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well as above-ground hose bibs. Hoyt's Hardware & Building Supply supplied the exterior fencing at cost. Cavanaugh Logging donated all the poles for the fence, the front and back gates, and the borders of all the beds.

Sisters Movie House and Sisters Art Works provided their venues for fundraising events. Many residents generously donated monetarily. Through the winter and spring the soon-to-be-garden was a beehive of activity — rain or shine or wind. Fortunately, there wasn't much snow that winter. Unsolicited manual labor arrived every time there was work to be done from raking rocks to clearing brush to setting fence posts. Sisters Coffee provided coffee for the work parties. The old building destined to be the garden shed was donated by Packit in Bend and remodeled by Patrick Lombardi to resemble an old Western building. Local gardeners donated perennials from their own gardens for the common areas.

The wagon that resided in the first garden and made the move to the new one came from Sisters resident Chuck Hoyt. It was originally used in the movie *Paint Your Wagon*, which was filmed here in Central Oregon. It is now beautifully covered with



PHOTO BY SUE STAFFORD

Creating the community garden was a multi-generational effort.

honeysuckle vines

By June 2007 the garden was completed, all 40+ plots were spoken for, things were planted and growing, and there was money in the coffers. A grand opening was held in June with a huge turnout of local residents in attendance. The children from A Joyful Noise Preschool sang garden songs, scarecrows created by local artists were auctioned off, and many, many thanks were given for helping to turn a kernel of a

dream into a living, blooming community asset in eight short months.

From those humble beginnings the garden has been nurtured and improved. Three years ago, with the sale of the Adams Avenue property, the garden moved to its new larger location on East Barclay Drive on the grounds of the Sisters Eagle Airport. It is a testament to the original vision and all the people, who over nine years, have continued to hope and believe.

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