



Nori In The New Year

Have you devoured any delicious sushi lately? If you have, you've probably enjoyed one of my all time favorite functional super foods: nori. Nori is the delicate blackish-green paper used to wrap sushi rolls. Nori is a pressed form of seaweed made from two particular red algae plants, "Porphyra yezoensi" and "Porphyra tenera". Almost 100% of all nori is farmed and harvested off the coast of Japan where nori farmers collect algae with large nets, rake it, shred it, press it into paper thin sheets, and dry it under the sun. Although nori is a delicate sea crop, it only takes about 50 days to grow from seed to harvest.

Nori is a staple food in Japanese homes and is making quite an impact here in the US. You might have noticed that most grocery stores and big box retailers sell sheets of nori in bulk, in snack packs, and shredded to enhance the taste of many Asian inspired dishes.

In my household, we devour nori. Ben loves it, the boys enjoy it, and I love to create healthy meals with it. Good thing for me and for you, nori continues to grow in popularity and is easy to find and buy. Nori is one of the healthiest foods on the planet and, like all marine algae, has more concentrated nutrition than most vegetables grown on land. Marine algae does more than taste great and fuel the body, by default they're said to improve lifespan,

prevent many diseases, and to increase beauty. And, listen up, of all the marine based algae, nori is considered one of the healthiest.

Nori is an excellent plant powered source of protein. Nori, by weight, is 50% pure protein and about one-third fiber. One sheet of nori has as much fiber as one cup of raw spinach, the same amount of omega-3s as two avocados, is a great source of iodine, vitamins A, B, and C, iron, magnesium, taurine (which helps aid healthy cholesterol levels), and only sets you back about ten calories!

I've found that nori is one of the most powerful, tasty, nutritious, and low calorie functional foods to be had. Many nutritionists and physicians believe adding nori to the diet might [reduce the chances](#) of developing many diseases and has been associated with improved metabolism. Chemists working with marine based proteins have found that the protein peptides in nori actually aid blood pressure, which can lead to a healthier heart.

I've been experimenting with nori for years now and usually make my family simple hand rolls. All it takes is a stack of nori, finely sliced veggies, finely sliced avocado, and some fish, crab, salmon, or shrimp, and a bit of wasabi, pickled ginger, and some Bragg's aminos (my favorite soy sauce alternative). I also crumble it on top of salads, over rice, and always toss it with my family's favorite kelp [noodles](#).

Today, we're going to start with a simple nori based spice blend called "Furikake", tackle an easy nori crisp snack, and finish off with my famous hand rolls.

"Put It On Anything" Furikake

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup toasted sesame seeds
- 2-3 teaspoons sea salt
- 3 sheets of nori (finely chopped)
- 3 - 4 Tablespoons of bonito fish flakes
- 1/2 teaspoon coconut sugar (optional)

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl or large jar, cover and toss, shake, or hand mix until well combined. Store in a covered container or covered Mason jar. This is a shelf stable recipe and adds the perfect dash of Asian flavor to rice, soup, rice noodles, and to my personal favorite, eggs, with a small squirt of Asian chili sauce.

Next, we're going to tackle a new recipe of mine that

incorporates a bit of wasabi into perfectly baked nori crisps. This recipe is a great way to introduce nori to your friends and family because it's super tasty, crunchy, and on par with traditional crunchy snack foods that most people like. I suggest whipping up at least two or three batches, believe me, these crisps go quick!

Wasabi Nori Crisps

Yield: about 60 crisps

Ingredients

1/4 cup water
2 tablespoons powdered horseradish wasabi
10 sheets nori
Sea salt

Directions

Heat your oven to 250°F.

Dissolve and whisk the powdered wasabi in the water.

Fold one sheet of nori in half.

Unfold and, with a pastry brush, lightly paint half the sheet with the wasabi water and sprinkle with sea salt.

Press the sheet closed and brush the top with the wasabi water. Don't add any more sea salt.

With a sharp knife, cut the nori into six strips and place on a baking sheet.

Repeat his simple process until you have used your nori or filled the baking sheet.

Bake for 10-13 minutes, or until the damp nori is darkened and completely dry.

Let cool and enjoy!

Now's the time to roll up your sleeves and roll out your own hand rolls. There is a trick to perfect hand rolls, and it has to do with creating a very fine layer of moisture over the nori before you load and roll it. You see, if you don't add any moisture, the nori will crack. If you add too much moisture, the nori will fall apart. There is, my friend, a specific art to hand rolling, but, as usual, it is as simple as pie.

We're going to give my sweet Asian chili, sardine, avocado, and veggie roll recipe a try. The recipe yields about 10 rolls. You can add more sardines, avocado, or vegetables if you feel the need.

Ingredients

Nori (one sheet per roll)
1 tablespoon honey
1 tablespoon mild crushed and dried red pepper
2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar
1 can wild caught sardines in oil
1 avocado
1 cup finely julienned vegetables (scallion, spinach, carrot, and cucumber)
2 cups cooked rice cooled to room temperature
Pickled ginger, Bragg's aminos, wasabi paste (use recipe from above), and sesame seeds to taste and for garnish

Directions

Prepare a pot of jasmine or brown rice. Set aside and let cool.

In a small bowl, combine the honey, pepper, and vinegar. Whisk and set aside.

In a separate bowl, mash the sardines and oil into a paste and set aside.

Peel, chop and mash your avocado.

Combine the avocado into the sardine paste and mix.

Julienne your vegetables, making sure to have long thin strips and set aside.

On a flat clean surface, place one sheet of nori shiny side down. Paint the nori with the sweet chili sauce. This will give the nori a bit of moisture and lots of taste. You need the moisture to roll the nori without it cracking, but don't saturate the nori.

Next, spread a fine layer of rice one inch from the top of the nori to about ¼ of an inch from the bottom.

Spread a thin layer of the sardine avocado mash over the rice.

Arrange a horizontal layer of julienned vegetables in the very middle of the sheet.

Starting from the bottom, gently roll the roll and use the open inch of nori to seal it all together.

Paint the closing seam with the sweet chili sauce, position the roll on a plate and serve with pickled ginger, Bragg's, wasabi, and a sprinkle of sesame seeds.

If you want to cut your roll before serving, use a very sharp knife and run it through water between each cut.

I certainly hope you'll take the time to play around with and prepare many delicious spice blends, snacks and rolls with nori and I encourage you to make it a staple item in your pantry. You know, this New Year is an awesome opportunity to say "yes" to many new superfoods. Find what works for you and role with it. No need to force yourself or your family into seaweed, but, I have a feeling, once you all try it, you'll find it hard to live without!