

Akamoku

Akamoku (*Sargassum horneri*) is a type of edible seaweed with a reputation as a superfood. It grows in bays around the town of Yura, where fishing communities harvest and process it for use in regional cuisine such as *akamoku-don* rice bowls. Dishes using the seaweed are available at restaurants and accommodations around Yura, and *akamoku* is sold in frozen packages for use in home cooking.

This reddish-brown variety of seaweed, known scientifically as *Sargassum horneri*, has a high nutritional value compared with other varieties of seaweed, such as *wakame* and *mozuku*. It has particularly high concentrations of fucoidan, polyphenols, and minerals such as magnesium and calcium. Fucoidan is a polysaccharide found in certain types of seaweed, and research shows it to have anti-cancer, anti-tumor, anti-viral, anti-ageing, and anti-inflammatory properties. Polyphenols are naturally occurring compounds with antioxidant properties.

Akamoku grows in the shallow waters of bays around the town of Yura, such as Ena Bay, to the north of town. It typically grows in dense colonies at depths of around 5 meters. In some cases, fronds can reach 8 meters in length, spreading outwards in clusters just under the water's surface. In spring, fishermen harvest *akamoku* from boats, either gathering the seaweed using long rods or diving into the water to gather it by hand.

Akamoku is generally not eaten raw and is boiled after being washed. During the boiling process, the fronds turn from reddish-brown to green and take on a viscous texture caused by the release of fucoidan. The last step is to chop or mince the fronds to enhance the signature texture. Prepared *akamoku* can be enjoyed in several ways. The simplest way is to eat it with some vinegar or soy sauce, but it can also be added to salads, soups, and noodle dishes. In *akamoku-don*, it is served on top of rice with an accompaniment of other toppings such as raw egg, whitebait, perilla leaf, and sometimes avocado.