



## FOOD OF THE FUTURE FARE

# Superfood from the sea



↑ *Sea algae are finding their way into western cuisine*

→ *Sea grapes, also known as umibudo algae or green caviar, are often served as a salad. The pearls are rich in iodine, mineral salts, trace elements, vitamins and amino acids*

The concept of algae as the food of the future was recently presented to over 170 lecturers, restaurateurs and investors at the exhibition hall in Gran Canaria.

Around ten billion euros are already being spent on algae worldwide every year, both for the almost 200 species of Atlantic macroalgae and for hundreds of microalgae. In the meantime, algae have



become a potential superfood not only for the Asian market. The chefs Fabián Maldonado and Abrahán Ortega emphasised at the conference that they already use algae in dried form and that res-

taurants would certainly be the first to be interested in fresh seaweed. Own algae production could enrich the local cuisine, be a new line of business for investors and at the same time be a fur-

ther step towards food self-sufficiency.

Seaweed is interesting from several points of view. If, as expected, the world population is nine billion people by 2050, new and, above all, sustainable food will be needed. Traditional agriculture alone is not enough to feed so many people. Algae are not only suitable for countries where food is scarce, but also for nations where the quality of food is poor due to industrialisation. Many products in Europe and the USA are industrially produced and therefore low in nutrients, but rich in calories. Nutritional deficiencies can be counteracted with algae.

The biologist Rui Pereira, who founded the Portuguese company AlgaPlus, is well aware of this. It's one of four companies which are already very successful with algae in Europe. In France alone, where there is currently the strongest demand for algae in Europe, there are already more than 700 products based on algae with a high estimated vitamin and mineral content. Some of the nutrients are traditionally provided by meat, as no terrestrial plant contains them. Also, algae have hardly any fat and can be used as a salt substitute for seasoning due to the salty-sour taste. In addition, algae are also a 'carbon dioxide eater' and contribute to the purification of the atmosphere from contaminating gases.

The Spanish food bank is also convinced of the potential of the algae and began researching its cultivation in Gran Canaria several years ago. The Gran Canaria Island Council plans to invest around €14 million in the blue economy over the course of the year.

## FUERTEVENTURA: OVER 118,000 KILOS HARVEST

### A record year for olive cultivation

**"We have produced more olives this year than ever before and our olive oil is now well known and sought after, not only in the Canary Islands, but also outside the archipelago" said Fuerteventura island president Marcial Morales.** In mid-December, the 83 traditional and five organic olive growers were presented with their olive oil. At the experimental finca Pozo Negro, which belongs to the island council, two olive oil presses are available to the local farmers. There the olives are cold-pressed, centrifuged, stored, checked for quality and then bottled in the individual producers' bottles. "Along with tomatoes, sea salt and aloe vera, olives have become one of our most important agricultural products," explained Morales. The number of olive plantations in Fuerteventura has increased steadily in recent years. All of Fuerteventura's olive oils, including those grown conventionally, are free of pesticides. ■



↑ *The 88 olive growers had their produce processed at the experimental finca*

This also includes a push for algae cultivation in order to promote food independence. The conditions on the island are ideal. The algae, which has so far been appreciated primarily by the cosmetics industry, is increasingly finding its way into supplying people with food or supplementary nutrients. It can be processed, and is currently mainly used in its dried form, as well as fresh.

Why not try a tortilla with sea-food lettuce or a colourful salad with sea grapes? There are over 20,000 species of algae worldwide, many of which have yet to be researched. Their enormous potential as food is far from being fully realised. It's

also clear that these quantities of algae, the food of the future, must not be taken from nature. Rather, they must be cultivated specifically for this purpose. At the conference, chefs Maldonado and Ortega proved that algae are not only healthy but also tasty. Maldonado from the restaurant El Cortijo served the guests a refreshing algae sorbet. He appreciates algae for the preparation of foams and sauces as well as a natural gelling agent. Ortega from the restaurant El Santo clearly sees the production of algae in Gran Canaria as an enrichment of the local cuisine and served the participants wreckfish with algae as proof. ■



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