

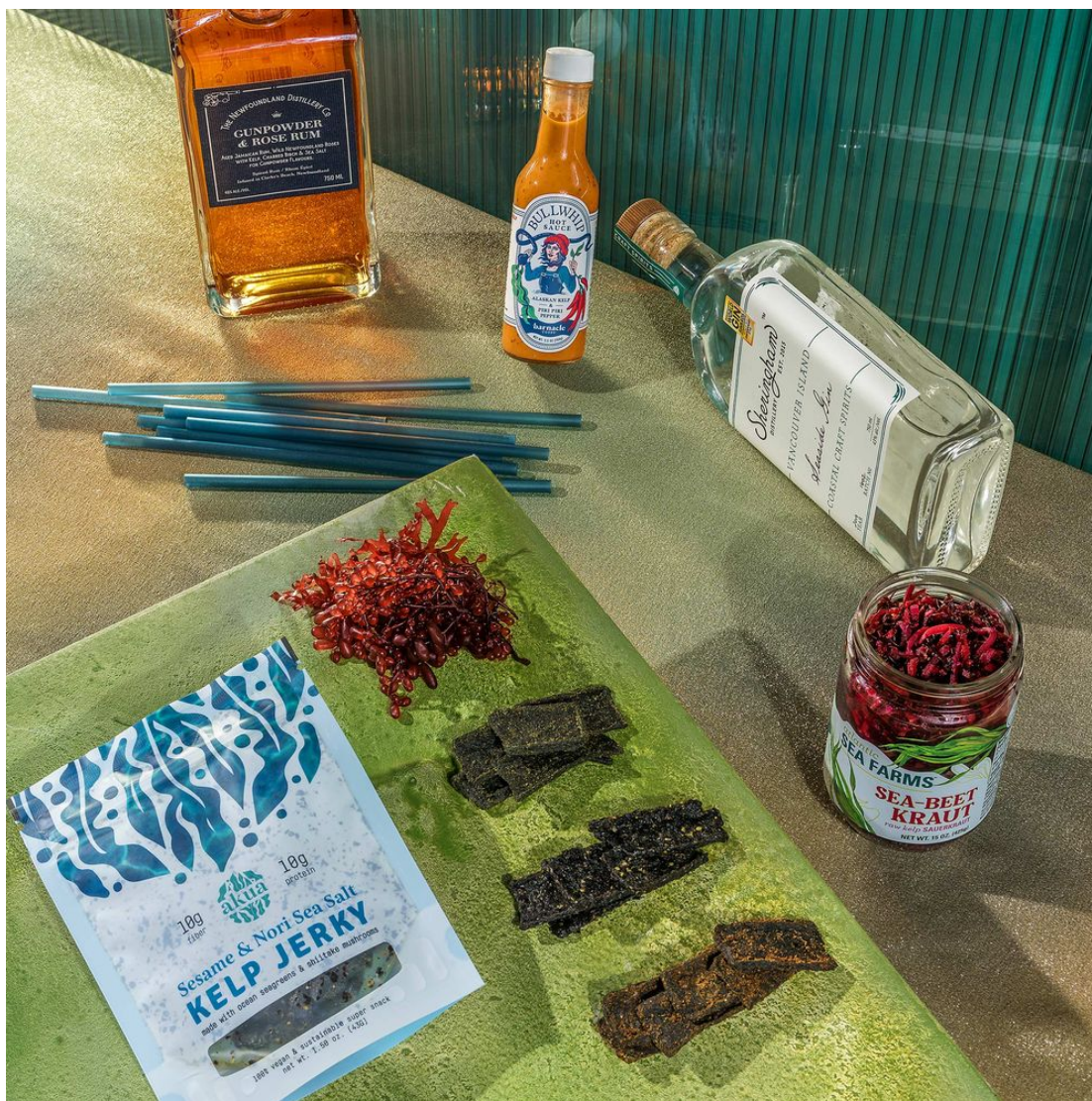
Goods

The Key Ingredient in These Hot Sauces, Gins, and Jerky? It's Seaweed

The super ingredient is not only good for you, it's good for the environment.

By [Kate Krader](#)

October 23, 2019, 6:40 AM HST



Seaweed is showing up in a wide range of new products (clockwise from top left:) Gunpowder & Rose rum, Loliware straws, Bullwhip hot sauce, Sheringham gin, Atlantic Sea Farms "sea-beet kraut," Akua's kelp jerky, and Monterey Bay's sea grapes. Photographer: Kelsey McClellan for Bloomberg Businessweek

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It's rare to get good news from the sea. Water temperatures are rising, fish stocks are being depleted, and the fish we eat are increasingly full of microplastics. But the oceans do hold one positive portent: seaweed. It's

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regenerative—it can grow about a foot a day—and carbon- and nitrogen-sequestering. Research suggests that, per acre, it can absorb more than 20 times as much carbon dioxide as a forest. In the U.S. and Canada, entrepreneurs are cultivating it and other macro algae for everything from kelp jerky to capsules containing shots of Glenlivet.

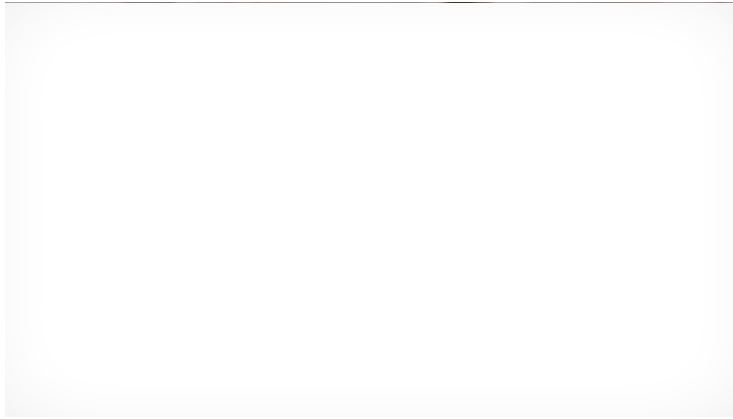
These companies have ambitious plans to grow in 2020, taking up more and more space on shelves and cleaning up more and more oceans. “We are eyes on the blue green economy,” says Chelsea Briganti, chief executive officer of packaging company Loliware. “Seaweed represents an opportunity, everywhere you look.”

Straws



Loliware's seaweed-based straws. *Source: Loliware*

Loliware first got attention on *Shark Tank* for making edible cups; it's since moved on to straws. The seaweed-based, pastel-colored products are compostable and marine safe, and companies as diverse as Marriott, the liquor company Pernod Ricard, and the Museum of Modern Art have picked them up. The Beacon, N.Y.-based company is in the process of developing seaweed products in anticipation of the EU ban on plastic cutlery in the first quarter of 2020. It's also crafting paper pulp from seaweed—“the first aquatic paper that doesn't use terrestrial based resources, or trees,” according to CEO Briganti—and seaweed products to replace the poly bags prevalent in fashion merchandising.



Hot Sauce



Hot sauce, a gateway to kelp consumption. *Source: Barnacle Foods*

“We see our products as gateway foods to introduce the American consumer to kelp,” says Lia Heifetz, who started [Barnacle Foods](#) in Juneau, Alaska, with her partner, Matt Kern. Their products feature bull kelp, native to the Pacific Coast, in familiar guises such as salsa. New to the line is Bullwhip hot sauce, which delivers a slow burn and a big hit of garlic, along with peri peri peppers and, of course, kelp.

Gin

Sporting a bottle that looks as if it washed up on the shore, Seaside Gin from [Sheringham Distillery](#) in Sooke, B.C., was named the best contemporary gin at the 2019 World Gin Awards, beating out 236 contenders. Its signature ingredient, wing kelp, is harvested from the Pacific, about a mile from the

distillery. Co-founder Jason MacIsaac, a retired chef, likens the effect of seaweed in the spirit to finishing a dish with salt. Sheringham also produces an aquavit that highlights briny kelp. In 2020, the distillery will bring out a barrel-aged aquavit.

Food Packaging

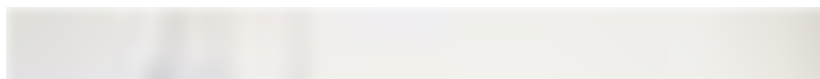


Notpla makes packaging that will disappear. Source: Notpla

Two of seaweed's biggest moments of 2019 came courtesy of [Notpla](#), a London-based packaging company that crafts products from French seaweed. First was sports drink-filled Oohos, which replaced plastic bottles and cups at the Virgin Money London Marathon. Then came the [Glenlivet "Capsule Collection"](#) made from Notpla's edible pods filled with whisky.

For 2020, founders Pierre Paslier and Rodrigo Garcia Gonzalez are focused on products less known in the war on plastic: ketchup and mayo packets and cardboard take-away containers, which look innocuous but are often coated with eco-unfriendly products such as Teflon. "The little condiment packs are a combination of plastic and aluminum, but recycling is not usually an option because they're so small, and it's easy for them to end up as litter in the environment," says Paslier. Notpla's condiment capsules are already being used in trial runs in 20 London restaurants using the Just Eat delivery service.

Yarn





AlgiKnit yarn becomes a reusable bag. Source: AlgiKnit

“If you think about recycling clothes, it’s a very surface-level approach that doesn’t get to the core of the problem of fashion, which is a toxic industry,” says Aleksandra Gosiewski, a co-founder and chief operating officer of AlgiKnit, a burgeoning biomaterials business-to-business company in Brooklyn, N.Y. It produces kelp-derived yarn and is working with brands to create a supply chain for products such as footwear and accessories, as well as clothes, all of which are made to degrade instead of taking up landfill space for years. “We are creating materials that can be used in everyday products like a T-shirt ... material durable enough that won’t wash away when you wear it in the rain, but that will biodegrade quickly when you no longer need it,” she says.

Jerky





High-protein, high-fiber vegan jerky, from Akua. *Source: Akua*

Using kelp sourced from New England ocean farms, New York's [Akua](#) has introduced high-protein, high-fiber vegan jerky that co-founder and CEO Courtney Boyd Myers calls the world's first "carbon-negative snack." Over the course of the year, Akua jerky has pulled 2,000 pounds of carbon from the ocean via its ocean-farmed kelp. By March, it will have nine flavors of kelp jerky on the market, including rosemary maple, chile lime, and mango habanero.

Sea Grapes



Monterey Bay Seaweeds' incredible, caviar-like sea grapes. *Source: Vendor*

Founder Michael Graham's day job is seaweed professor at Moss Landing Marine Labs at San Jose State University. His side gig is [Monterey Bay Seaweeds](#), which supplies Michelin-starred restaurants, from [Eleven Madison Park](#) in New York to [Aubergine](#) in Carmel, Calif., with freshly harvested product. His faintly sweet and salty sea grapes—caviar-like seaweed bubbles—go for \$60 a pound. And in 2020, he'll introduce sea truffles, a red seaweed with hints of earthy, peppery mushrooms.

Rum

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The [Newfoundland Distillery Co.](#)'s Gunpowder & Rose Rum features seaweed in an unconventional way. Traditionally, sailors were given a ration of rum that was proofed—sprinkled with gunpowder and lit to prove that it had enough alcohol. Co-founder Peter Wilkins tried to recreate it. “Health Canada weren’t convinced,” he says. As an alternative, he sourced local ingredients that would mimic the charred taste of gunpowder—kelp for the sulphur and Newfoundland sea salt, too. More straightforward is Newfoundland’s seaweed gin, flavored with locally harvested dulce, that earned double gold at San Francisco World Spirit Competition in 2018. Next for Newfoundland Distillery: seaweed-infused bitters.

Tea



Cup of Sea's tea blends have seaweed nutrients hiding within. *Source: Cup of Sea*

Josh Rogers quit Google to start Portland, Maine-based [Cup of Sea](#), where he makes blends of savory teas that highlight seaweed. Sea Smoke is a mix of dulce and lapsang souchong, whereas Bold Coast Breakfast is a black tea with seaweed nutrients hiding inside. Rogers also pushes seaweed products at Heritage Seaweed, his year-old store in Portland, and is developing products that include chocolate and bath soaks. In 2020, he'll expand his seaweed portfolio to include umami cocktail bitters and an infused olive oil.

Sauerkraut





Atlantic Sea Farms uses kelp to make a vibrant kraut. *Source: Atlantic Sea Farms*

Former diplomat Briana Warner heads up [Atlantic Sea Farms](#) in Saco, Maine, the largest kelp aquaculture business in the U.S. She calls out her business as a local economy booster: The Gulf of Maine is warming faster than 99% of the world's oceans at a time when the state's coastal economy depends on the lobster industry. Her products include Sea-Chi, a spicy marine version of kimchi, and Sea-Beet Kraut, a reddish-purple, fermented raw kelp condiment made with beets and carrots. Atlantic Sea Farms plans to expand its harvest and production from 250,000 pounds this year to 600,000 pounds in 2020.

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