**Chondrus crispus**

[Synonyms: Chondrus crispus forma abbreviatus, Chondrus crispus forma aequalis, Chondrus crispus forma densus, Chondrus crispus var. planus, Chondrus crispus forma polychotoma, Chondrus crispus var. sarniensis, Chondrus crispus forma typica, Chondrus platysma, Fucus crispus, Fucus crispus var. filiformis, Fucus crispus var. lacerus, Fucus crispus var. patens, Fucus lacerus, Gigartina heterocarpa, Gymnogongrus norvegicus, Iridaea heterocarpa, Oncotylus norvegicus, Polymorpha aequalis, Polymorpha norvegicus, Sphaerococcus norvegicus]

**IRISH MOSS** is a perennial seaweed (red marine alga). Found invariably submerged in clumps, often in pools on rocky coastlines of the North Atlantic Ocean and the western Baltic, as well as the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and in parts of the Pacific, it has feathery-like, reddish-purple to reddish-brown fronds.

It is also known as Alga perlada (Spanish), Carageen, Carrageen, Carrageen moss, Carrageenan, Carragheen, Carragheen mossrahan, Carraghéen (French), Carraghen (French), Carrigeen tang (Danish), Carraigin (Irish), Chondrus (English, French), Chondrus crispus (Italian), Condry (Spanish), Folha de alface (Portuguese), Goémon frisé (French), Iberian moss, Iers mos (Dutch), Irísches Moos (German), Irísch Moos (German), Jelly moss, Karrageenilevä (Finnish), Karragenalg (Swedish), Karragentång (Swedish), Knorpeltang (German), Krusflik (Norwegian), Lers mos (Dutch), Mousse d’Irlande (French), Mousse perle (French), Muschio irlandes (Italian), Musgo gordo (Portuguese), Pearl moss, Sea moss, and Seaweed.

In cold water the fronds will swell and partially dissolve giving a sticky solution. If, instead, they are boiled in water (a decoction) a gel is formed upon cooling that can be thickened with the addition of milk protein.

Warning – Irish moss can be poisonous for some animals (but not for humans). *Crispus* means ‘closely curled, finely or irregularly wavy’ with reference to the fronds.

The common name Carrageen (in its different spellings) is said by some to be derived from a small Irish town named Carrageen (but authorities have pointed out that this place is non-existent today and may never have existed) and by others from a Gaelic word for ‘little rock’ *carrigin*.

In the mid-19th Century Irish emigrants fleeing famine are believed to have introduced Irish moss to New England (USA).

It was used in the past for fining beer, feeding cattle, dressing cotton, stuffing mattresses, and sizing rope as well as a colour thickener for printing cloth.

Today Irish moss is primarily used commercially by the food industry as a substitute for gelatine in milk drinks, ices, syrups, fruit juices, dressings, cheese and confectionery. It can also be used for making jellies, soups and custards. It can be found in shoe polishes, and it is also used by the paint and printing industries. The textile industry employs it to give a soft finish to materials, and the leather industry uses it in the finishing processes after tanning. For the cosmetics industry this seaweed provides a thickener too and it is also used by the pharmaceutical industry.

Medicinally, it was recommended by herbalists in the 1800s for the treatment of coughs and other chest ailments, as well as for kidney and bladder disorders. But it sees little use.
today in these capacities although it is occasionally contained in proprietary medicines and is used as an emulsifier for cod liver and other oils.