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*Porphyra umbilicalis*

[Synonyms : *Porphyra vulgaris*]

**PURPLE LAVER** is a seaweed. Found in the North Sea, the North Atlantic and part of the Mediterranean, it has wavy red, purple,-green or reddish-brown fronds (like a slightly rumpled piece of cloth).

It is also known as Black butter, *Chishima-kuro-nori* (Japanese), Laver, Laver bread, Laver seaweed, Pink laver, *Porphyrtang* (German), Slack, Slake, Sloke, and *Veckad purpurtång* (Swedish).

*Umbilicalis* is derived from Latin *umbilicus* (navel) with reference to the navel-like depression in the frond where it is attached to a rock.

This was one of the seaweeds that used to be popular in Britain as a food. Records show that laver bread was on sale in Cardiff market in the mid-1940s, and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century purple laver is still eaten in southern Wales and in Ireland. However its modern popularity in Western countries is negligible compared with that in both China and Japan where it is viewed as a sought-after delicacy. In fact demand there is such that natural supplies are insufficient and purple laver is cultivated.