



213/B

Let's get more proteins to our body from a specially developed cracker using the red seaweed *Gracilaria verrucosa*

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Seaweeds are large aquatic photosynthetic plant-like organisms which have many health beneficial compounds. There's an interesting phrase revealed by the father of medicine, Hippocrates: "*Let food be the medicine*". Interestingly, seaweeds as a food can make people healthy. Have you ever tasted foods incorporated with seaweeds? Sri Lanka is an island with a long sea belt around it where these seaweeds can be found attached to rocks and other creatures in the sea. There are red, green and brown seaweeds in the nature that mainly classified according to their colour. Fortunately, a red seaweed called *Gracilaria verrucosa* is found in the eastern coast of Sri Lanka. Coastal belt of Trincomalee is viewed like a red carpet at certain periods of the year due to the massive growth of this seaweed. People who live nearby call this seaweed as "Kanji pasi" which they have practiced to collect them for preparing porridge. Hence, it declares that *Gracilaria verrucosa* has been used as a food in Sri Lanka from previous time. Here's good news; a group of researchers from the Department of Food Science, University of Sri Jayewardenepura has developed a cracker using this seaweed to enrich the diet with protein and other nutrients. Moreover, laboratory tests were carried out to find the physical and chemical properties of the new product. Dried and powdered *G. verrucosa* can be added up to 5% (w/w) in making crackers with better taste, odour, colour, appearance and overall acceptability. The protein content in crackers increased as $15.25 \pm 0.01\%$, $18.63 \pm 0.28\%$, $20.33 \pm 0.01\%$ and $25.01 \pm 0.01\%$ when adding seaweeds at 0%, 1%, 3% and 5% (w/w). Today, protein requirement plays an immense role in the human diet. Therefore, enhancement of protein in foods is globally essential. These crackers have a reddish brown colour and hardness increases with incorporation of seaweeds. These physical properties are favourable features of consumer acceptability. *G. verrucosa* dried powder is rich in macro minerals (Ca, Na, Mg and K; 560.53, 1112.89, 1935.81 and 3874.21 mg/kg respectively). Furthermore, these seaweed crackers have exhibited therapeutic properties like antioxidant activity with 12.63% DPPH radical scavenging activity. Shelf-life of these crackers is 15 days without addition of preservatives. Production of seaweed crackers is cost effective since addition machinery and equipment are not required. However, this would be an initial step in Sri Lanka to fulfill the protein requirement in human diet.

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