

Anatomy of *Wakamé* 若布の解剖 *Wakamé no Kaibō*



“Anatomy” of *wakamé* (sea tangle)

Four segments marked in red are (top to bottom):

ha (leaf)

kuki, (stem)

mékabu (bulb)

né (root).

Large fronds of *wakamé* are chopped and dried, made into brittle bits.

Semi-dried, salted *wakamé* is made from stem and leaf portions.

The *mékabu* bulb, often with roots attached comes to market fresh in the spring and is very gelatinous with a slippery mouth-feel (the Japanese love this texture!).

Japanese cookery glorifies the seasons and the shifts from one to the next. Early spring in both the Tohoku (on the Pacific coast off Iwate Prefecture) and in and around Shikoku (Naruto off the Tokushima coast is where most of the fresh *wakamé* is harvested. After harvesting, *wakamé* is dipped in boiling water in a process called *yu-doshi*. The color changes from brown to bright green. The fronds are then used fresh in salads and soup, sometimes blended into a sauce. Most of the crop is salted or dried for storage. Below right is the bulb portion, *mékabu* with its ruffled leaves and stiff *kuki* stem.

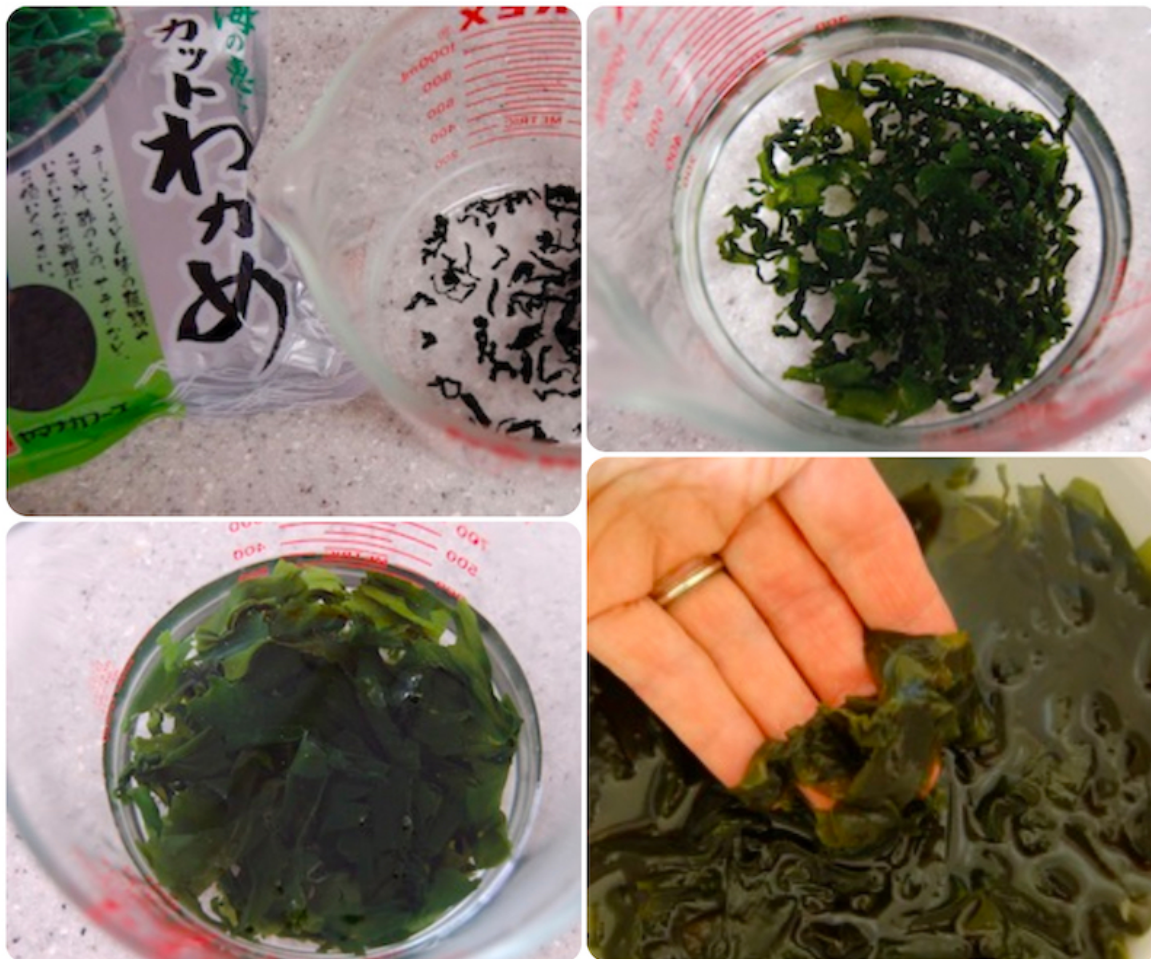




USING SALTED “FRESH” WAKAMÉ:

Place the salted fresh *wakamé* fronds in a bowl with cold tap water to cover. Swish to loosen the salt and rinse using gentle rubbing, massaging motions. Let the rinsed *wakamé* sit for 2 or 3 minutes (longer soaking diminishes its flavor and texture, and lowers its nutritional value). Drain well.

Open up a few fronds. If whole, they will look like leaves with a center rib. Slice in half following the rib line. If the rib line is tough, trim it away before cutting the fronds into manageable pieces.



USING RE-HYDRATING DRIED WAKAMÉ

Place the dried *wakamé* bits in a bowl with cold tap water to cover. The pieces will expand to many times their original size. Let the *wakamé* sit for 2 or 3 minutes (longer soaking diminishes its flavor and texture and lowers its nutritional value).

The water from softening *wakamé* is NOT SAVED or consumed (it contains trace amounts of elements not conducive to good health).

When the *wakamé* is softened, drain, and gently squeeze out excess moisture. Rinse, drain and chop coarsely if the pieces are awkwardly large (often hard to tell in their dried state).