

UMS team develops seaweed noodles

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KUALA LUMPUR: A research team at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) has developed a marine-based vegetable noodle from Sabah seaweeds.

The veggie noodle had won two innovation awards in 2010 and 2011, "Silver Award" at the BioInnovation Awards 2011 and recently "Gold Medal Award" at the PECIPTA 2011, International Conference Exposition on Inventions of Institutions of Higher Learning Malaysia 2011.

The product was the result of two year of research by grants from the Ministry of Higher Learning and Mosti (Ministry of Science, technology and Innovation).

The research team comprised Dr Patricia Matanjun, Foo Tiang Kit, Mohd Ismail Asmawi Kassim, Chan Pei Teng and Norhafizah Ismail from the School of Food Science and Nutrition, UMS.

Dr Patricia said the research has shown that these local seaweeds are highly nutritive with good antioxidant activity and exert a cholesterol-lowering and cardioprotective effect in an animal model study.

"Some of the research findings have been published in Journal of Applied Phycology, Journal of Medicinal Food and Conference proceedings at national and international level," she said.

Dr Patricia said SeaVeg is a newly developed vegetable-based instant noodle with unique flavour, natural colour and enhanced with health promoting ingredients from Sabah tropical seaweeds.

"These seaweeds are rich source of dietary fiber, minerals, proteins and vitamins. It is also low in lipid content, but contains a significant amount of omega-3 fatty acids such as eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA)," she said.

Dr Patricia said the product has no added salt, no artificial colouring, no additives and preservatives.

"Seaweeds were added in this noodle for

their natural blend of minerals such as potassium, sodium, calcium, magnesium and trace elements, such as iodine and selenium.

"The seaweeds were also used for their natural colour of pigments (chlorophylls and carotenoids) to replace the artificial colouring in making noodles," she said.

Dr Patricia said the high level of aspartic and glutamic acid are responsible for the special flavour and taste of seaweeds.

Apart from the seaweed instant noodles, SeaVeg, Dr Patricia and her research team has also developed nearly 50 different types of food products formulations using these local seaweeds.