

An Litir Bheag

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 552 (which corresponds to Litir 856). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was speaking last week about eating seaweed. As part of the course – Àrainneachd, Cànan is Dualchas – that I was running on Skye, we ate a few types of seaweed. I want to tell you about the tastiest ones.

To begin with – carragheen. It's a small seaweed. It varies from green to purple. The Gaels dry carragheen and store it until they use it. They make a type of jelly [similar to milk curds] of it. But it doesn't have a good taste. Sugar must added to give it flavour.

But some seaweeds taste good. We tried some boiled in water or fried in butter. They tasted best with butter.

Everybody enjoyed dulce. That's a red seaweed with a salty, nutty taste. The Gaels are very familiar with it, and some people still make a thick dulce soup. Dulce is full of minerals and vitamins, and high in potassium.

The seaweed that grows

Bha mi a' bruidhinn an t-seachdain sa chaidh mu ithe feamainn. Mar phàirt dhen chùrsa – Àrainneachd, Cànan is Dualchas – a bha mi a' ruith as t-samhradh san Eilean Sgitheanach, dh'ith sinn grunn seòrsaichean feamainn. Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mun fheadhainn as blasta.

An toiseach – cairgein. 'S e feamainn bheag a tha ann. Tha e eadar uaine is purpaidh. Bidh na Gàidheil a' tiormachadh cairgein agus ga stòradh mus cleachd iad e. Nì iad nàdar de shlaman dheth. Ach chan eil blas math air. Feumar siùcar a chur ann airson blas a thoirt dha.

Ach tha blas math air cuid de dh'fheamainn. Dh'fheuch sinn feadhainn air am bruich ann an uisge no air am fraighigeadh le ìm. 'S ann le ìm a b' fheàrr a bha am blas.

Chòrd duileasg ris a h-uile duine. 'S e sin feamainn dearg air a bheil blas saillteach, cnòthach. Tha e gu math aithnichte do na Gàidheil, agus bidh feadhainn fhathast a' dèanamh 'càl duilisg'. Tha duileasg làn mhèinnirean agus bheothaman, agus àrd ann am potassium.

'S i an fheamainn as àirde a

highest on a rocky shore is the channelled wrack. Crofters feed it to cattle. It's full of trace elements and, fried in butter, it has an excellent flavour.

Everybody enjoyed the glasag/sea lettuce, especially when crisped in the pan. Glasag is a green seaweed called 'sea lettuce' in English. It's full of Vitamin C, iron and protein.

The Gaels would always eat imleagan. The imleag is a small shiny brown plant shaped like a button. Fronds that are narrow and long come from it. And the fronds are just as tasty as the imleagan. This seaweed is called iallan-mara or sea spaghetti.

Finally, the sweetest seaweed – langadal – a large, long one called sugar kelp in English. I haven't mentioned sloke or badderlocks or gutweed. There is much that can be eaten on the shores of Scotland!

dh'fhàsas air cladach creagach an fheamainn chìrean. Bidh croitearan ga biathadh do chrodh. Tha i làn bheag-eileamaidean agus, air a fraighigeadh ann an ìm, tha blas air leth oirre.

Chòrd a' ghlasag rinn uile, gu h-àraidh nuair a dh'fhàs i rud beag cruaidh anns a' phana. 'S i a' ghlasag feamainn uaine air a bheil *sea lettuce* ann am Beurla. Tha i làn Beothamain C, iarainn agus pròtain.

Bha e a-riamh na chleachdadh aig na Gàidheil a bhith ag ithe imleagan. 'S i an imleag lus beag gleansach donn ann an cruth putain. Thig frondaichean às a tha caol agus fada. Agus tha na frondaichean a cheart cho blasta ris na h-imleagan. 'S e iallan-mara no *sea spaghetti* a tha air an fheamainn seo.

Mu dheireadh, an fheamainn as mìlse – langadal – tè mhòr fhada air a bheil *sugar kelp* ann am Beurla. Cha do dh'ainmich mi slòcan no mircean no a' ghlasag chaolanach. Tha gu leòr a ghabhas ithe air cladaichean na h-Alba!