

Coast character

Dawn Hourigan on how her company ATLANTIC KITCHEN, which imports wild seaweed, is a result of an Irish coastal childhood

INTERVIEW **Richard Mellor** PHOTOGRAPH **Andrew Montgomery**

While I was growing up in rural County Cork, my dad would take me down to Man o' War cove, a short crescent of dark sand below sea cliffs, to collect mussels and seaweed. Then he'd make his famous seafood chowder.

That regular childhood exposure to seaweed is what indirectly led me to found Atlantic Kitchen, in late 2012. Based in London, we import organic-certified seaweed – chiefly from western Ireland – for both consumers and chefs like Yotam Ottolenghi. Seaweed is delicious, as well as sustainable and healthy, but it's not a familiar food for most people.

I work with fourth-generation harvesters up in County Clare, two counties north west of Cork, who know the shore inside out. Dulse – the common purple one – has three a year, and we also order in nori, wakame and the tagliatelle-like sea spaghetti, which each have one or two seasons. The workers always cut at the root so the seaweed regrows. County Clare boasts pure, unpolluted seas, meaning the quality is very good.

I split my time between London and Ireland, returning home to catch up with the harvesters and my family. This stretch of coast remains a real outpost. The wildness is wonderful: it feels like freedom. You just give up control, and realise how small you are. Visit atlantickitchen.co.uk or, to buy, ottolenghi.co.uk/pantry.

