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Assessment of jute (*Corchorus olitorius*) leaves as a substitute to Nori in making Sushi

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Nori is edible dried seaweed used in Japanese Sushi dishes. It is made from red algae (*Porphyra*) and is processed and imported mainly from Japan, Korea, and China. The technology and environmental conditions necessary for the sustained mass production of Nori limits Filipino producers despite the abundant supply of *Porphyra* especially in the Northern coasts of the archipelago. This situation contributes to higher retail prices of Sushi. Gatchalian and De Leon's (1992) product improvement concept was adapted to experiment on a Sushi wrap from jute (*Corchorus olitorius*). Locally called Saluyot, jute is highly prized for its fiber and nutritious content. A researcher-made questionnaire with a seven-point semantic differential scale was used to evaluate the sensory characteristics of the experimental jute-wrapped Sushi as against the control Nori-wrapped Sushi. Thirty (30) respondents at a local university gave a higher rating to the jute-wrapped Sushi for appearance, aroma, taste, and texture and t-test results showed no significant difference between the two Sushi samples. Given these results, Jute is said to be a viable substitute to Nori for Sushi and similar Asian rice-ball dishes. Recommendations to improve the experimental product's taste and studies on packaging, shelf life and market testing are proposed. Mass production of the jute wrap would mean a cheaper alternative source for Nori and offer additional revenue for jute farmers, processed food manufacturers and food retailers.

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