



Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Oysters, But Were Afraid to Ask

A dare. A local curiosity. A southern specialty. These were enticements in your intro to Louisiana oysters. However, the mystique of oysters may actually scare some home cooks away.

The Louisiana Seafood Board brings you a handy guide to selecting and preparing oysters, so you can serve this delicacy fearlessly.

What Do Oysters Look Like?

Oyster meats are cream to light brown with ruffled edges and a silky texture. Avoid fluffy white oysters as they're filled with water. Oysters should not be floating, but packed closely -- with no more than 10% liquid.

Oysters are available in pints or quarts. Check for government required information: Best-If-Used-By Date, Interstate Shellfish Permit #, weight, nutrition facts, and Country-of-Origin label. Always choose American products, as quality standards for seafood are far superior to those of other countries

How Do Oysters Smell?

Oysters have a clean ocean smell. Never buy oysters with an odor.

How Much Is One Serving?

Louisiana oysters are available year-round and vary in size from season to season. Skinny oysters come as many as 30 to the pint. Medium or fat oysters come 16 to 18 per pint. Either way, USDA defines a raw serving as three and a half ounces. So, a pint is approximately three servings.

What Do Oysters Taste Like?

American oysters, Eastern oysters, Gulf of Mexico oysters, or Louisiana oysters -- they are actually all the same animal. In fact, there is only one oyster that is native to the Gulf and Atlantic coasts.

However like fine wines, oysters have subtle nuances in flavor - depending on where they're cultivated. In a blind taste test, by an independent researcher, consumers chose Louisiana oysters over others sold in the U.S. 85% of the time.

Louisiana oyster farmers describe them as "salty with a sweet finish," "succulent," "nice, fat and salty."

How Do I Store Oysters?

The shelf life of just shucked and washed oysters is 14 days. At home, refrigerate oysters by setting the the container in a bowl of ice and storing in the coldest part of refrigerator. It's best to use fresh oysters within one or two days. Freezing oysters is not recommended.

How Do I Cook Oysters?

Gently, quickly, easily.

TRADITIONAL LOUISIANA OYSTER STEW

4 servings

1/2 cup shallots, diced
2 tbsp. butter
1 pint milk
1 1/2 pints medium Louisiana oysters
Salt & pepper to taste

Over a high heat, sauté shallots in butter. Stir in milk. Bring to boiling point, then lower heat. Ease in oysters. Simmer until oyster edges furl (3-5 minutes). Add salt & pepper. Serve with crackers.



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