

Oyster Processing and Oyster Recipes

These recipes could be created with oysters purchased in the jar or in the shell, but ideally you'll experiment with oysters you've harvested from Washington's public beaches. The daily limit for recreational harvest is 18 oyster per person, removed from the shell. (Oysters eaten on the beach count toward your daily limit). Shells must be left at tide height as where they were gathered. The shells left behind are critical setting substrate for both the native Olympia oyster and the naturalized Pacific oyster. Oysters should be kept cold for their trip from the beach to your home. A freezer pack and small cooler works well. If you do purchase oysters in the shell, consider saving some shells to use for cooking oysters you've harvested in the wild. These shells can be run through a dishwasher and used over and over to create an attractive stuffed oyster, or even to grill shucked oysters on the BBQ.

Processing oysters in the shell:

Scrub the shells under cold running water with a brush. Discard any open shells, as the oyster is dead and not edible. When clean, insert a strong blunt knife or oyster knife between the shells near the hinge and with a twisting motion pry the shells apart. It is wise to protect your hand with a heavy glove, in case the knife slips. When open, insert the knife between the shells and cut the adductor muscle, which holds the two shells together. Be sure to sever both sides of the muscle holding the oyster to the shells. Try to retain as much of the oyster liquor as possible. If not serving the oyster on the half shell, drain them, and strain the juice to remove any particles of shell and sand. Place oysters and juice in a covered container in the refrigerator.

Oysters may be opened by steaming. Put the scrubbed and rinsed oysters in a kettle, with very little water, not more than 1/2 cup to 2 dozen medium oysters. Steam 5 to 10 minutes, or until the shells open. Lift out gently so you do not spill the juice in the shell. Use in cooked dishes within a day or two.

Avoid over-cooking oysters; they are toughened by high or prolonged cooking. Use moderate heat and cook just until they plump up or the edges curl.

Recipes

Simple Pan Fried Oysters

We make these for out-of-state (or country) guests who don't feel comfortable eating raw oysters.

Shuck oysters and shake them in a container with Italian seasoned breadcrumbs*. Heat butter in frying pan with a dollop of olive oil. Fry golden brown in high heat. Sprinkle lightly with kosher salt and a few twists of pepper. Serve with a wedge of lemon, a shot of ice cold vodka and a nice crispy pilsner in an appropriate tall glass. Serve with homemade tartar-type sauce below. (Garlic aioli or hot sauce are also good.)

*This recipe can be easily made gluten-free using any gluten-free flour, cornmeal, granulated garlic and ground black pepper and other spices, to taste, to replace the breadcrumbs.

Tartar-type homemade sauce

1 cup good mayonnaise
Juice of half a lemon
1 teaspoon prepared horseradish
1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
2 dashes Tabasco, Frank's or other Louisiana-style red pepper sauce
1 medium dill pickle, chopped fine
1-1/2 tablespoon sweet relish (or other relish with a bit of sweetness)
Fresh ground pepper

Mix ingredients together about 15 minutes ahead, and put a dollop on the serving plate as a dipping sauce. This is also good on corn.

Oysters Rockefeller

The recipe that I use was originally for indoor cooking. I have adapted it for the grill.

36 fresh oysters on the half shell	6 tablespoons butter
6 tablespoons finely minced raw spinach	3 tablespoons minced onion
3 tablespoons minced parsley	5 tablespoons breadcrumbs
Tabasco sauce to taste	1/2 teaspoon Pernod
1/2 teaspoon salt	

Melt the butter in a saucepan. Add all the ingredients except the oysters. Cook, constantly stirring for 15 minutes. Line six pie tins with rock salt. Set 6 oysters in the rock salt on each pie tin. Place the tins on a hot grill. Close the lid. The oysters will open in about 3-4 minutes. Divide the topping into 36 equal portions. Place one portion on each oyster. Close the grill lid and bake for 3 or 4 more minutes until the tops begin to turn brown. Serves 6

Oysters Rockefeller Casserole

1/4 pound good quality bacon	1/2 medium onion or 2 shallots, finely diced
2-3 cloves garlic, finely diced	2 boxes of frozen spinach
Juice of one lemon	1/4 teaspoon sea salt
Ground black pepper	8 oz. block of cream cheese
1/4 cup of cream	Hot sauce
Shredded white cheese	Optional: artichoke hearts, chopped

Turn oven to Broil and coat casserole dish with pan spray, melted butter or bacon grease. Let fresh shucked raw oysters drain in a colander until ready for use.

Cook 1/4 lb. good quality bacon, let it get crisp but careful to not burn. Place cooked bacon on paper towels to drain and cool. Leave about 3 tablespoon of bacon grease in the pan, disregard the rest. On medium heat sauté onion or shallots in the bacon grease. Also diced garlic cloves. Add thawed, well drained frozen chopped spinach to the pan and the fresh squeezed juice of one lemon, stir frequently not to over-brown the spinach. Spinach requires salt so add about 1/4 tsp of Kosher or Sea and a couple dashes of ground black pepper or fresh ground. An excellent addition would be canned, drained & chopped artichokes, as many as you can handle! Add block of cream cheese, cream and a couple dashes of your favorite hot sauce to the spinach. Let simmer, stirring mixture so that the cream cheese is fully melted and ingredients now resemble a beautiful dip. Put drained oysters in the casserole dish, spread out evenly. Top with a slight sprinkle of kosher salt followed by the beautiful spinach mixture. Top this with your favorite shredded white cheeses. (Swiss, white Cheddar and Shredded Parmesan are my favorite. Some Feta would also be lovely.) Crumble the bacon on top of the cheese.

Broil on a rack closer to the middle of the oven until the cheeses turn a little brown around edges. The spinach mixture will cook the delicate oysters slightly and that is exactly what we want! Have this as a one dish wonder meal or as an amazing dip with buttered baguette toasts (homemade of course). If you have an abundance of oysters, this dish freezes well and is very ideal for the low carb diets.

Oysters and Pearls Stew

2 green onions, finely chopped	2 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon minced garlic	5 cups chicken or fish stock
1/2 cup small pearl tapioca	12-ounces fresh raw oysters, undrained
1/4 teaspoon white pepper	1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper

In a large pot, sauté onion and garlic in butter until translucent. Add chicken stock and bring to a simmer. Add the tapioca and cook for 5 to 10 minutes. When the tapioca is clear, turn heat to low and add the oysters. Cook over low heat until the edges of the oysters begin to curl and the stew is hot but not boiling. Serve in bowls and garnish with sliced green onions. Serves 4 to 6.

Oyster Cocktail

1-1/2 pints oysters
Cocktail sauce

Lettuce
Lemon wedges

Drain and dry oysters. Allow 6 oysters for each serving and arrange in lettuce cups on individual salad plates. In the center of each plate, place a small container with cocktail sauce. Garnish with lemon. Serves 6.

Cocktail Sauce

1 cup catsup
1 tablespoon horseradish
1 tablespoon onion, minced
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

2 tablespoons vinegar
1 tablespoon celery, minced
1/2 teaspoon salt
Few drops Tabasco sauce

Blend all ingredients and chill.

A Truly Seductive Soup

This recipe is from The Grand Central Oyster Bar and Restaurant Cookbook. This is for ONE serving so be sure to double this for TWO, and if you think you will want more than one serving (and I bet you will) –make even more.

8 freshly opened oysters
1 tablespoon chili sauce
1/2 teaspoon paprika
1 oz. of clam juice
1/4 cup oyster liquor, also called liquid (the juice inside the oyster)
1 slice of dry toast (I used peasant bread)

2 tablespoon (1/4 stick) of sweet butter
1 tablespoon Worcestershire Sauce
1/2 cup cream
Dash celery salt

Place all ingredients except cream, toast and 1 tablespoon of butter in the top part of a double boiler over boiling water. Do not let the top pan of the double boiler touch the water below. Whisk or stir briskly and constantly for about 1 minute until oyster edges begin to curl. Stir carefully as to not damage the oysters. Add cream and continue stirring briskly, do not boil! Pour pan ingredients into a soup plate over the slice of dry toast. Top with remaining 1 Tablespoon butter, sprinkle with paprika, and serve right away.

Oysters Étouffée

3/4 stick of butter
1 cup chopped bell pepper
1 teaspoon minced garlic
6 oz. tomato sauce
Juice of one lemon

1 cup chopped onion
1/4 cup finely chopped fresh parsley
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup water
Two dozen shucked oysters

Melt butter in large heavy pot (like a Dutch oven). Add next five ingredients and sauté over low medium heat until translucent, stirring occasionally. Add tomato sauce and water. Cover and simmer 15 minutes. Add oysters and lemon juice and cook uncovered ten minutes. Serve over rice. Serves four.

Tomato Oyster Bisque

1 pint oysters
1 slice onion
1 tablespoon flour
1/4 teaspoon pepper

1 quart milk
4 tablespoons butter
2-1/2 teaspoons salt
1 can condensed tomato soup

Drain oysters, and chop. Add liquor, and heat slowly to boiling point. Scald milk with slice of onion. Melt butter in top of double boiler, blend in the flour, add milk, and cook until thick, stirring constantly. Add oysters, seasonings, tomato soup, and heat to boiling point. Serve immediately with croutons. Serve 6.

Rich Oyster Stew

24 Fresh oysters, shucked, liquor reserved	1 teaspoon celery salt
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper	1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
2 cups heavy cream	2 cups whole milk
1 stick butter	Salt and pepper to taste
Fresh chopped parsley	Oyster crackers

In a large saucepan heat oyster liquor with celery salt, cayenne and thyme. Add oysters and cook just until edges curl. Stir in cream, milk and butter and heat mixture together slowly stirring until stew is hot and steamy throughout – never boil. Season pot with salt pepper to taste. Sprinkle stew with cut parsley and ladle into bowls. Serve immediately with oyster crackers. Serves 4.

Oyster Soufflé

1 pint shucked oysters	1/4 cup butter or other fat
1/4 cup flour	1/3 cup milk
1/2 teaspoon salt	Few grains pepper
Few grains cayenne	2 or 3 drops Tabasco sauce
3 eggs, separated	1/4 cup cracker crumbs

Examine oysters for any bits of shell. Cook oysters in their liquor until the edges begin to ruffle; drain well, save liquid, and dice oysters. Melt fat, gradually blending in flour, milk and 1/2 cup of oyster liquid. Cook, stirring constantly until thickened. Add seasonings and allow to cool. Stir in well-beaten egg yolks and add diced oysters. Beat egg whites until stiff, but not dry, and fold into oyster mixture. Sprinkle cracker crumbs in bottom of a greased 1-1/2 quart casserole. Pour in soufflé mixture. Oven poach in a moderate oven 350 degrees F for 40 minutes, or until set. Serve at once. Serves 5-6

Roasted Corn, Oyster & Baby Bok Choy Salad with Spicy Corn Lemongrass Vinaigrette

4 dozen fresh Pacific Sound oysters, shucked & removed from shells, juices reserved	
Nonstick cooking spray	6 ears fresh corn, shucked
6 bunches of baby bok choy, halved	3/4 cup vegetable oil, divided
1 tablespoon kosher salt, divided	1/2 teaspoon black pepper, divided
2 tablespoons fresh lemongrass, crushed	1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper
1/4 cup rice wine vinegar	
2 teaspoons fresh cilantro, chopped	

Preheat oven to 375F degrees. Spray a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray; set aside. Cut the corn from cobs and place on baking sheet. Reserve the cobs for another step in the recipe. On another baking sheet, place the halved bok choy cut side up and drizzle lightly with vegetable oil. Sprinkle the corn and the bok choy with salt & pepper then place in the oven. Roast the corn for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, and the bok choy for 10 minutes per side. Meanwhile, make the vinaigrette by scraping the milk from the reserved corn cobs into a bowl. Add to a food processor or blender, along with 1/2 cup of the roasted corn, the reserved oyster juice, lemongrass, crushed red pepper, rice wine vinegar, and remaining vegetable oil. Puree mixture until completely blended; season with salt and pepper. Remove bok choy and set aside. Remove the corn, stir and place the oysters on top; return to oven for five minutes. After five minutes, remove corn from oven; set aside. To plate the dish, place two halves of the bok choy, cut side up on each of six individual serving dishes. Spoon the corn over the top and evenly divide the oysters. Lightly drizzle with the vinaigrette and garnish with cilantro. Pass remaining vinaigrette at the table. Makes 6 salads

Oyster & Fava Bean Stew (author unknown; adaptable to a variety of seafood)

This recipe came together from random items in the fridge and some oysters I picked up today. It has a lot more vegetables than a traditional oyster stew, but I like the variety of texture and the sweetness the veggies impart. If you want it to be more about the oysters, you could omit the butternut squash and strain the stew before you add the roux. I also used soymilk because that's what was in the fridge (and it was surprisingly creamy), but if you feel like this is sacrilege, by all means, swap it out for real milk. If you wanna go for the full coronary, you could even add a bit of cream at the end.

This would also work well with some diced fennel in the mirepoix, or with a splash of Pernod at the end. You could also add other seafood, like clams, shrimp or fish if you wanted to. I was also thinking that it would make a great filling for a pot pie, but you'd probably have to refrigerate the filling and put the oysters into the pie raw before going into the oven to prevent them from overcooking.

1 medium carrot diced	2 small stalks celery diced
1 medium onion diced	1 cup butternut squash cut into 1/2" cubes
6 medium crimini mushrooms each cut into 6 wedges	2 bay leaves
2 tablespoons dry sherry	2 cups soymilk (or regular milk)
1-1/2 teaspoon kosher salt (or 3/4 tsp regular salt)	1/2 teaspoon ground sage
black pepper to taste	1 tablespoon butter
1-1/2 tablespoons flour	1/2 cup shelled fresh fava beans
12 small oysters shucked with liquor reserved	

To make the mirepoix, sauté the carrots, celery and onion in a tablespoon of olive oil over medium heat. It should be soft and fragrant, but not brown. Add the mushrooms, butternut squash and bay leaves and continue to sauté another 4-5 minutes. Turn up the heat and add the sherry, cook until the alcohol has burned off then add the soymilk, salt, sage, and black pepper. Turn down the heat to medium low and simmer until the butternut squash is cooked. In a separate pan, make a roux. Melt the butter, then add the flour. Cook until the two are well incorporated and the flour is cooked but not brown (about a minute or two). When the butternut squash is cooked, ladle some of the liquid from the stew into the roux and whisk until smooth. Pour this back into the stew and gently stir together making sure there are no clumps of roux. To finish, add the fava beans and cook for about 2 minutes. Then add the oysters and liquor and cook until the oysters start curling around the edges (make sure you don't overcook them, or they will get tough). Serve immediately with a thick slice of crusty bread.

Angels on Horseback

1 pint oysters	2 teaspoons chopped parsley
1/2 teaspoon salt	Dash of pepper and paprika
Bacon slices, cut in half	

Drain oysters on paper towels. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and paprika. Roll bacon around each oyster and secure with toothpick. Place under broiler about 4 inches from heat for 8 to 10 minutes or until bacon is crisp; turn carefully and broil other side for 4 to 5 minutes or until bacon is crisp. Serve at once as appetizer or for a meal.

Angels on Horseback, Oven Version

1 pint oysters	2 teaspoons chopped parsley
1/2 teaspoon salt	Dash of pepper and paprika
Bacon slices, cut in half and slightly cooked	1/2 cup heavy cream
2 cups of cubed red potatoes, fingerlings or new potatoes	

Drain oysters on paper towels. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and paprika. Cube or cut potatoes to about 1 inch cubes. Steam until potatoes are just tender. (This can also be done in the microwave.) Pre-cook bacon slices to about half-done. Wrap a section of bacon around each oyster and a cube of potato and place bundles in a glass baking dish. Pour heavy cream over oyster bundles. Bake at 350F until bacon is done and oysters have started to curl, about 20 minutes.

Seafood Gumbo

2 dozen shucked oysters	1 pound of peeled raw shrimp
1/2 pound fresh picked crab	1 cup of canola oil
1 cup of all-purpose flour	1 cup of diced onions
1 cup of diced bell peppers	1 cup of diced celery
1 or 2 tablespoons minced garlic to taste	1 tablespoon chopped parsley
1 or 2 tablespoons of Creole seasoning to taste	1 bay leaf
1/3 cup of chopped green onions	Salt and pepper to taste
1 quart of warmed seafood stock or chicken broth	1 quart of warmed water
6 oz. lager or other beer—do not use a light beer	Cooked rice
Hot sauce	

Combine oil and flour in a large 6-8 quart Dutch oven on medium to medium-high heat to make a roux. Stir constantly until the flour and oil are the color of milk chocolate, about 20-30 minutes. Remove from heat and add the diced onion, bell pepper, and celery and sauté for one minute. Roux will darken. Add garlic and warmed broth and water. Put back on medium-high heat until it boils. Add the bay leaf and beer. When mixture comes to a boil, reduce heat to a simmer and cover. If the gumbo becomes too thick, add more warm water or stock to desired consistency. Add salt, pepper, and Creole seasonings. Simmer, for 30-40 minutes. Add seafood and simmer for 20 minutes. Correct seasonings and sprinkle parsley and green onions on top. Remove bay leaf. Serve over rice. Pass the hot sauce and French bread. Makes 8-12 servings.

Oyster Chowder

1 pint oysters	3 tablespoons onion, chopped
3 tablespoons butter	1 cup water
2/3 cup celery, diced	2 cups potatoes, diced
1 tablespoon salt	1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 quart milk	Parsley

Fry onion in butter until slightly brown, add water, celery, potatoes, salt and pepper. Cover and cook until vegetables are tender. Add milk and let come to boiling point. Simmer oysters in their liquor about 5 minutes or until edges curl. Drain. Combine with milk and vegetables. Serve immediately with chopped parsley sprinkled over the top. Serves 6.

Char-grilled oysters with Roquefort cheese and red-wine vinaigrette from 86 New Orleans Cookbook / Chef Scott Snodgrass

1 cup of crumbled Roquefort cheese	1 tablespoon chopped garlic
1 tablespoon of chopped shallots	1 green onion, sliced
1/8 cup of honey	1 cup of red wine vinegar
1/2 cup of pure olive oil (not extra virgin olive oil)	Juice of 1 Lemon
1 tablespoon of kosher salt	1/2 tablespoon of ground black pepper
12 - 18 oysters, shucked and placed on the half shell	

Combine all ingredients, except oysters, in a mixing bowl. Put oysters on the half shell, over a hot charcoal fire. I placed the oysters on a fish/vegetable rack to keep them even on a tray. It is also easy to move them on and off the grill this way. Top each oyster with 2 tablespoons of the vinaigrette and cook until edges of the oysters start to curl, about 2 minutes. Place a mound of rock salt (about 1 cup) on a salad plate and top with 3 - 6 oysters on the shell per person. Serve with your favorite white wine or a glass of champagne.

Curried Oysters

1 pint oysters	1/2 cup onion, chopped
2 tablespoons butter	3 tablespoons flour
1 1/2 cups milk	2 hard cooked eggs
3/4 teaspoon salt	1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 teaspoon curry powder	3 cups cooked rice

Simmer oysters in their liquid about 5 minutes or until edges begin to curl. Drain. Cook onion in butter until tender. Blend in flour, add milk, and cook until thick, stirring constantly. Add oysters, sliced eggs, seasonings, and heat thoroughly. Serve in rice ring. Garnish with parsley. Serves 6.

Oysters Casino

4 dozen oysters, shucked and drained	24 deep half shells
8 slices Bacon	2 large Shallots, peeled and finely diced
1/4 cup Red Bell Pepper, finely diced	1/4 cup Celery, finely diced
Juice of one lemon	2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
6 to 8 drops Hot Pepper Sauce	

Put two oysters on each half shell. On a baking sheet, lay down a bed of Kosher or rock salt at least 1/4" deep. Arrange the shells on the salt bed.

Preheat the oven to 400F. Cut the bacon strips into thirds. In a skillet on medium heat, cook the bacon until it just starts to wrinkle. Don't cook until bacon is crispy, it will be overdone at the end. Remove to paper towels and drain. To the bacon drippings add the shallots, bell pepper and celery, and sauté until just tender. Stir in the lemon juice, Worcestershire sauce and hot sauce, bring to a boil and turn off the heat. Spoon the mixture onto the oysters and top each with a piece of bacon. Bake for 10 minutes, plate and serve.

Oyster Stuffing for Chicken or Turkey

1 pint oysters
1/2 cup celery, chopped
1/2 cup onion, chopped
4 tablespoons butter
4 cups day old bread crumbs (crumbled rice cracker can be substituted to make gluten-free stuffing)
1 tablespoon parsley, chopped (can increase parsley to taste)
1 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon poultry seasoning
1/8 teaspoon pepper
Optional: Add one can chopped water chestnuts

Drain oysters, saving liquor, and chop. Cook celery and onion in butter until tender. Combine oysters, cooked vegetables, bread crumbs, and seasonings, and mix thoroughly. If stuffing seems dry, moisten with oyster liquor. Makes enough for a 4 pound chicken. Sometimes we make this in a bread pan to expedite the bird's roasting time.

For 10-15 lb. turkey 3 times above recipe
For 16-20 lb. turkey 4 times above recipe
For 21-25 lb. turkey 5 times above recipe