



The fresh ocean taste... from South Australia to you

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FACT SHEET 1

ABOUT THE PACIFIC OYSTER (LATIN NAME: CRASSOSTREA GIGAS)

Originally from Japan, the Pacific oyster is now the most widely cultured oyster in the world. Pacific oysters are large, fast growing, cupped oysters with deep, elongated, thick and rough shells.

The shell colour ranges from muddy brown to light grey and contains some purple streaks and spots.

The meat is creamy white with a dark fringe around the mantle at times, although the colour of the meat as well as the shell can vary by region and season.

While the oyster can grow to over 300 mm it is normally harvested in the Coffin Bay region at 60 – 80 mm or less.

The mild, sweet flavour of live Pacific oysters is highly valued. The texture is firm and plump.

Availability

Previously oysters were only available during the months of March to December because they spawn during the summer months converting using up fat or glycogen reserves during this process.

In recent years oysters have been available year round due to the ability to harvest spawnless oysters during the summer months.

Oysters are in peak condition during the autumn and winter months.

When buying oysters

Ensure live oyster shells are hard and closed. Open shells should close tightly when tapped. If they don't close, they are dead and should be avoided since bacteria multiply very quickly in dead shellfish, making them dangerous to eat. The shape of the shells will give you a good idea of the amount of meat you are getting. The deeper the cup of the lower shell, the better.

Fresh shucked oysters should be plump, have good colour, and smell fresh. Overall, oysters should also have a natural sea smell and should be avoided if they smell sulphurous or feel slimy.

Storage

Live oysters should be stored in a refrigerator cup-side down and covered with a damp towel. Live oysters need to breathe and therefore will not survive when stored in buckets of water, plastic bags or airtight containers. Store both live and fresh oysters in the refrigerator at 2°C to 10°C. Properly refrigerated oysters will stay alive up to 7 days after being harvested. Refrigerate shucked oysters in their liquor (oyster juices), cup side down. Consume oysters within 24 hours of shucking.

Oysters can be frozen in the shell. Oysters should be frozen as quickly as possible after delivery and consumed within 3 months of freezing.



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FACT SHEET 2

SAFETY FIRST – Storage and handling

On delivery:

Remember this is a live product. Bring an esky from home to place your individual orders in after collection. Keep in a cool place until they can be placed in a refrigerator or freezer in a freezer bag.

Storage at home:

Live oysters should be stored in a refrigerator cup-side down and covered with a damp towel. Live oysters need to breathe and therefore will not survive when stored in buckets of water, plastic bags or airtight containers.

Store both live and fresh oysters in the refrigerator at 2°C to 10°C, being vigilant to not expose to cross contamination of raw meat or poultry juices. DO NOT store them directly on ice, while live.

Properly refrigerated oysters will stay alive up to 7 days after being harvested.

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FACT SHEET 3

SHUCKING AN OYSTER - Tips and Safety

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Tips for Making Shucking Oysters Easier

Many cooks have their own bucket of oyster tricks that they all swear by, here a few suggestions to make the job easier:

- Before shucking, submerge oysters in white vinegar water for a few seconds;
- Steam oysters for a few seconds;
- Bake for 1 minute in a conventional oven at 300 degrees F.
- Place the oysters in the freezer for three hours. The ice will have lifted the top shell making shucking easier, then thaw before eating;
- Relaxing the oysters by placing them in the freezer for only ten to fifteen minutes.
- Make sure to occasionally sharpen the tip of your oyster knife, especially if you use the side-entry method of opening.

Safety first - The proper oyster glove and proper shucking knife

The safest way to ensure that you will not nick, or cut your fingers or hands, is to wear proper oyster shucking gloves. These gloves make the slippery job of oyster shucking a lot safer and a faster. Use a proper oyster shucking knife. DO NOT use a sharp kitchen or paring knife.

Anyone who handles or shucks oysters needs to take some basic safety measures. A common source of infection can come from shucking oysters without using the proper tools, protective gear, or safe handling precautions, since shucking oysters can be both a source of fresh wounds and a potential for infection for previously acquired wounds. Shucking an oyster is not for children.

The right tools are:

- Protective eye gear. You could get a serious ocular infection, if any shell pieces get in your eyes;
- A good oyster shucking knife with a sturdy handle and curved tip;
- Heavy duty garden gloves or oyster harvesting gloves (This is a necessity as oysters have both sharp ridges and barnacles on the outside shell) – at least for the hand holding the oyster;
- Hard and stable work surface (picnic table, workbench, solid counter-top).

SHUCKING AN OYSTER

STEP 1: Equipment: A shucking knife and a sturdy glove. BE CAREFUL, risk of injury.



STEP 5. Twist the knife, like you would a doorknob exerting minimal forward pressure. There may be a slight “pop” as the joint gives way. Slide knife backwards along the underside of the top shell to cut the muscle and separate the oyster from the top shell.



STEP 2. The adductor muscle is attached to both the top shell of the oyster (left) and the bottom shell (right).



STEP 6. Pull top shell back and remove completely.



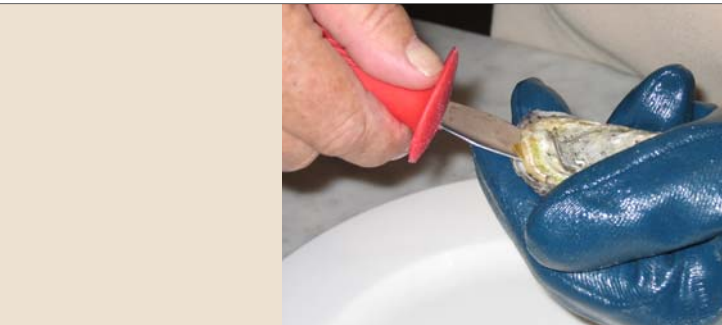
STEP 3. Cradle the oyster in palm of hand as shown



STEP 7. Insert tip of shucking knife under oyster as shown and cut the bottom part of the adductor muscle to separate oyster from bottom shell.



STEP 4. Insert tip of shucking knife between top and bottom shells at approximately 2 o'clock position. Use care - risk of injury if knife not properly inserted. CAUTION - wear gloves!



STEP 8. Turn oyster over to present in shell for eating



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FACT SHEET 5

PREPARATION/USAGE

The sooner Pacific oysters are used, the better they will taste. Oysters are particularly popular served raw on the half-shell.

Frozen oysters should be thawed in the refrigerator and once thawed, they should not be refrozen.

Oysters in the shell can be served raw, baked, steamed, grilled or in specialty dishes. Shucked Pacific oysters can be served raw, sautéed, steamed, grilled, or used in soups and stews or other specialty dishes.

Pacific oysters require very little cooking time and should be heated slowly to avoid them turning to rubber. Regardless of the cooking method used, they are done when the mantle starts to curl.