

## North Carolina Oysters in Demand

### HOW TO SELECT, HANDLE, CLEAN AND STORE SEAFOOD

Oysters harvested in southeastern waters are known as the American oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*). This oyster is a bivalve mollusk, most often found in tidal waters of bays and estuaries.

Most southeastern oysters are taken by hand rakes or tongs. The most productive season is fall through the winter. Oyster flavor, color and texture will vary by location and season.



Whether shucked or in-the-shell, oysters are highly perishable and should be eaten and or cooked as soon as possible.

Harvest must be from waters “approved” relative to bacterial content and other contaminants. In some instances, oysters may be relayed or moved from non-approved waters to approved waters, for a specified period of time prior to final harvest.

Processing must be conducted by a state certified dealer in compliance with all pertinent State and Federal regulations. Fresh and Frozen oysters are available in various forms, both in-shell and shucked.

The oyster should appear cream to beige in color, packed in somewhat transparent liquor. The preferred flavor is a mild oyster with a slight salty taste. An excessive opaque or cooked appearance may denote temperature abuse in processing.

For more information on local oysters, visit the NC Division of Marine Fisheries.

**Contributed by David Green**