

Roisterous Good Times Long Linked With Popular Oyster

BY JOYCE TAYLOR

Seafood Education Specialist
UNC Sea Grant College Program

Jonathan Swift wrote, "He was a bold man that first eat an oyster."

Probably so, but he really began a good thing! Oysters have been eaten since before recorded history. Roman feasts were not complete without the shellfish delicacy, harvested in England, other parts of Europe, or the Mediterranean.

Written records indicate the establishment of artificial oyster beds 100 years before the birth of Christ. Oriental accounts of oysters as food are much older. Oyster shell reefs indicate that they have been in existence for 50 million years.

Oysters were a staple part of the diet of Indians and early settlers, and by the mid-19th century, Americans were engaged in an unending love affair with the oyster. "Oyster expresses" and "oyster caravans" carried the shellfish to inland regions; almost every town of any size had an "oyster parlor." And the fame of Southern oyster roasts continues to this day.

The subject of literature and art for centuries, oysters have also been the subject of a couple of interesting myths. One says that they can be eaten only in months containing "r" in their names. Not true. In days when refrigeration was poor, oysters spoiled quickly in the summer months, which have no "r." Also, they are "fatter," thus tastier, in fall, winter and early spring, before they spawn in summer.

Another story says that oysters make one amorous. This arises from the fact that oysters contain cholesterol (though the content is not high), a basic building block for male and female hormones. There is no evidence, however, that added cholesterol (in any food) affects sexual behavior!

A frequently-asked question on the subject concerns red or pink, green or mottled oysters. These colors are harmless, usually associated with the oyster's diet. The red color disappears when the oyster liquid is warmed.

Do beware, though, of any pink color accompanied by a sour odor; this is caused by a spoilage yeast, and the oysters should not be eaten.

Oysters contain high quality protein, minerals and vitamins, and are low in calories and fat. Easily digested, they are often recommended for special diets. And most importantly, they taste good!

As noted in the Oct. 12, 1889, issue of the Detroit Free Press, "To the oyster, then, a hoister, with him a royal royster."

Royster A Hit

A more sedate royster (roister) by the N.C. State University seafood lab brought smiles to the faces of the taste testers who sampled a variety of oyster dishes.

Below are recipes for some of the top-ranked dishes on the menu. Copies of this article and the entire group of recipes are contained in Bulletin SI-1-85, available at no charge from the NCSU Seafood Lab, P.O. Box 1137, Morehead City, NC 28557.

Oyster Chow Mein

1 pint standard oysters, with liquor
2 large stalks celery, chopped
1 medium onion, chopped
1 medium green pepper, chopped
1/4 C. butter
2 T. butter
One 4-oz. can mushrooms
2 T. flour
One 1-lb. can bean sprouts, drained
2 T. teriyaki sauce
Salt and pepper to taste
One 5 1/2-oz. can chow mein noodles.
Saute chopped vegetables in one-fourth cup butter until tender. Remove from heat. Cook oysters in

two tablespoons butter until edges begin to curl. Remove from heat. With slotted spoon put oysters into skillet with vegetable mixture.

Drain mushrooms, reserving liquid. Add enough mushroom liquid to oyster liquid to make three-fourths cup. Stir flour into liquid and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until mixture comes to boil and thickens. Gently stir into oyster mixture along with mushrooms, sprouts and seasonings. Cook slowly until heated through. Serve over chow mein noodles. Serves four.

Oysters and Mushrooms au gratin

1 pint standard oysters, with liquor
2 T. butter
2 T. flour
1/2 C. oyster liquor
1/2 C. heavy cream
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. paprika
1/4 tsp. seafood seasoning
One 4-oz. can sliced mushrooms, drained
1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
Bread crumbs
Paprika
Drain and dry oysters, reserving li-

quor. Melt butter in medium saucepan. Add flour and stir until blended. Slowly stir in oyster liquor and cream. Add salt, paprika and seafood seasoning. Cook, stirring until mixture comes to a boil and thickens. Reduce heat, add mushrooms, lemon juice, Worcestershire sauce and oysters. Heat, stirring until edges of oysters begin to curl, but do not boil. Put into four to six individual shells or ramekins. Sprinkle with bread crumbs and paprika. Place under broiler until lightly browned, two to three minutes. Serves four to six.



Three Bedroom Unit with 1985 Total Square Feet



It begins with the Ocean Isle Beach mystique. This seven-mile-long protected island is rich in the tradition of undisturbed family vacations. For years, families have enjoyed the wide, uncrowded beaches, bays, marshes and the scenic beauty of the Intracoastal Waterway. And when they're not fishing or boating, there's spectacular golf and other pastimes within minutes of all the peace and relaxation.

Ocean Point, the only concrete

and steel highrise on the island, has attracted beach lovers who appreciate these very large luxurious 2 and 3 bedroom homes perfectly designed for island living. Spacious. Comfortable. And with stunning oceanfront and marsh views.

But there are some things that you'll have to do without on Ocean Isle Beach. Things like lines of traffic, overbuilding and a sense of being lost in the crowd. Maybe that's why the homeowners at Ocean Point find the island life at Ocean Isle Beach so irresistible.

From \$145,000 to \$395,000

Model/Sales Office, Eleven Causeway, Ocean Isle Beach, N.C.

W.E. Bright, Broker-in-Charge/Sales and Marketing by Leonard, Call, Taylor and Associates, Inc.



How Does This Quiet Family Beach Attract Some of the Most Affluent and Discriminating Buyers on the East Coast?

Ocean Point
at
OCEAN ISLE BEACH RESORT

(Outside N.C.)
1-800-421-7747
(In N.C.)
1-800-682-1556 1-919-579-7300