## 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 ovsters 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 caten only in months containing "r" in their names. Not true. In days when refrigeration was poor, oysters poiled 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 nake one amorous. This arises from the fact that oysters contain noiesterol (though the content is not high), a basic building block for male ind female hormones. There is no vidence, however, that added holesterol (in any food) affects sexal behavior!

A frequently-asked question on the ubject concerns red or pink, green r mottled oysters. These colors are armless, usually associated with he oyster's diet. The red color disapears when the oyster liquid is warm-

Do beware, though, of any pink colr accompanied by a sour odor; this s caused by a spoilage yeast, and the systers should not be eaten. Oysters contain high quality proein, minerals and vitamins, and are ow in calories and fat. Easily ligested, they are often recommendd for special diets. And most imporantly, they taste good! As noted in the Oct. 12, 1889, issue of the Detroit Free Press, "To the byster, then, a hoister, with him a royal royster."

**Oyster Chow Mein** 1 pint standard oysters, with liquor 2 large stalks celery, chopped 1 medium onion, chopped 1 medium green pepper, chopped <sup>1</sup><sub>4</sub> 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 512-oz. can chow mein noodles. Saute chopped vegetables in onefourth cup butter until tender. Remove from heat. Cook oysters in

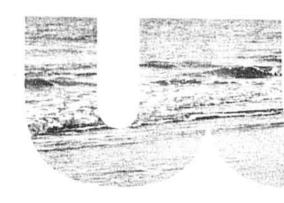
two tablespoons butter until edges begin to curl. Remove from heat. With slotted spoon put oysters into skillet with vegetable mixture.

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 12 C. oyster liquor 12 C. heavy cream <sup>1</sup><sup>2</sup> tsp. salt \*, tsp. paprika \*, 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 mushroms, 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.

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## **Royster A Hit**

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

Below are recipes for some of the op-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.

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