U.S. Gulf of Mexico Oyster

U.S. Gulf of Mexico Oysters are a bivalve mollusk. They are Eastern Oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*), the same species as Atlantic Blue Points. However, the taste and texture of Oysters is affected by the conditions, such as salinity, nutrients in water, and temperature, of the specific location they are grown in. Thus, Oysters are often identified by the region they are grown in. Gulf Oysters are wild-captured from the Gulf of Mexico.

Gulf Oysters are protandric, meaning that they first spawn as males but later spawn as females when they grow larger. Gulf Oysters spawn in the summer. The meats thin during spawning and many people consider the taste to be inferior during the spawning season. Oysters may be a carrier of Vibrio bacteria. This is a naturally occurring bacteria found in marine environments and present the highest risk to people with compromised immune systems. However, there are methods of post-harvest processing that eliminates any Vibrio. Gulf Oysters may be pasteurized and many companies do this in different ways.

Following *simple handling steps* will help keep the Oysters in top quality. The Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood WATCH® rates farm-raised and wild-caught Oysters from the Gulf of Mexico as a “Best Choice.”

Sources

**Species Name**
Crassostrea virginica

**Source**
Gulf Oysters are from the Gulf of Mexico. Louisiana is a leading Oyster producing state, but other states also harvest these Oysters. They can be found in coastal regions along the Gulf of Mexico in shallow brackish water, estuaries, sounds and shallow tidal and subtidal zones. They attach themselves to the substrate and prefer firm substrate. They have been found on pilings, hard rock bottoms, and the shells of other Oysters, as well as cans, tires, boats, bottles and crabs.

**Seasonality**
The availability of Gulf Oysters is affected by weather, ocean conditions and seasons. The best time to buy Gulf Oysters is from October to May.

**Fishing Method**
Gulf Oysters are wild-captured mostly by dredges with some taken by tongs.

Features
Flavor
Gulf Oysters have a mild, delicate taste and meaty, delicate texture. The meats should be fatty and smooth.

Dietary Information
Per 100g raw, edible portion:
Calories 51
Fat 1.71g
Saturated Fat 0.474g
Protein 5.71g
Sodium 85mg
Selenium 19.7mcg
Cholesterol 40mg
Omega-3 0.610g
Source: USDA

Appearance
The shells of Gulf Oysters are elongated, rough, spoon-shaped and white to gray-brown colored. The inside of the shells has a purple adductor muscle scar. The meats are creamy to light brown and turn ivory when cooked.

Uses

Preparation
Gulf Oysters can be eaten raw but can also be prepared many ways including baked, fried, grilled, sautéed, smoked, steamed, boiled, broiled, roasted or poached.

Substitution
Pacific Oysters, European Oysters, and Atlantic Blue Point Oysters may substitute for Gulf Oysters.

Handling
Shellstock (oysters in the Shell) are live and should be stored in a container that will allow the oyster to breath, but does not allow air to flow and dehydrate the oyster. Cover the container or place a moist cloth over the oyster to prevent dehydration. Refrigerate between 34 and 38F. Always store your shellstock with the original shellstock certification tag as required by law. DO NOT ICE. DO NOT STORE IN WATER.

Keep shucked meat refrigerated between 34 and 38F. Store frozen Oysters around 0F and thaw in the refrigerator.

Market

Sizes and Cuts
Live Gulf Oysters are usually marketed at 3-4 inches. They are also sold fresh and frozen shucked. Shucked Gulf Oysters are available fresh in 4-pound and 8-pound pails and 12-ounce retail bags, and frozen in a 10 pound case.
**Pricing Scale**
Oysters are expensive. Due to market and currency fluctuations, please contact your Seattle Fish Company of New Mexico associate for up-to-date market information and current pricing.

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**Shelf Life**
Gulf Oysters, as with all shellstock, are distributed with an FDA Interstate Shellfish Tag which will state a date of harvest. Oysters may be consumed raw within 14 days. NEVER eat or serve an oyster that is open or dead, discard immediately.

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