



A GUIDE TO BUYING LIVE OYSTERS

Buying & Transporting Live Oysters

Live or raw oysters can be purchased in sacks, mini-sacks, and by count (dozen). When purchasing live unshucked oysters, make sure the commercial fisherman or processor is properly licensed to sell and a harvest tag is attached to the sack or stamped on the box to trace origin. After purchase, move your live oysters directly to an ice chest for safe transporting.

To safely transport:

1. Start by adding a layer of ice in the bottom of the chest.
2. Place a layer of oysters on the ice.
3. Add alternating layers of ice and oysters.
4. Finally, add a good layer of ice on top.

Be sure to open the plug and prop the ice chest so that water runs out. Oysters should not be in standing water at any time. Additional ice should be added as needed.



Look for the Tag

A harvest tag is a tag placed on oyster products detailing harvest, shellfish, and fishermen information. The main purpose of the tag is to describe how an oyster should

be safely consumed. The color of the tag indicates if the product is safe for raw consumption based on harvest refrigeration times. A white tag oyster is best for raw consumption. Pink tag oysters can also be used for raw consumption but can't be sold outside the state of Louisiana. Oysters with green tags must be sold for processing, and cannot be purchased for raw consumption.

What Is the Risk?

Oysters filter water to feed. If the water contains bacteria, it can concentrate in an oyster's muscle. *Vibrio* are pathogenic bacteria that naturally occur in the same coastal waters where oysters live. *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* and *Vibrio vulnificus* are two types of bacteria commonly associated with shellfish that can cause illness including watery diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, fever, and chills. Illness onset of symptoms occurs within 24 hours of ingestion and lasts about 3 days. Severe illness is rare and typically occurs among people with a weakened immune system. Risks from raw consumption of oysters can be mitigated by rapid cooling of oysters during harvest and shorter storage times. This is why harvest tags are so important!

THERE MAY BE A RISK ASSOCIATED WITH CONSUMING RAW SHELLFISH AS IS THE CASE WITH OTHER RAW PROTEIN PRODUCTS. IF YOU SUFFER FROM CHRONIC ILLNESS OF THE LIVER, STOMACH OR BLOOD OR HAVE OTHER IMMUNE DISORDERS, YOU SHOULD EAT THESE PRODUCTS FULLY COOKED.



GENERAL TIPS: Throw out any oysters with open shells • Refrigeration temperature must be 45°F or less • Live oysters should be consumed or frozen within 7-10 days from initial harvest