

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1

JANUARY | FEBRUARY 2016

ALABAMA



SWEET
Treats

\$4.95



The Oyster at Murder Point



WITH GENERATIONS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY, THE ZIRLOTT FAMILY STARTED MURDER POINT OYSTERS WITH THE GOAL OF EXPANDING THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE GULF COAST SEAFOOD INDUSTRY. CUTTING-EDGE EQUIPMENT AND OYSTER FARMING METHODS HAVE HELPED THEM FIND SUCCESS.

Alabama's shimmering Gulf waters are brimming with variety. No trip to the Gulf Coast would be complete without indulging in our delicious seafood: Gulf shrimp, crab, snapper, you name it. Until very recently, however, our oysters came from distant waters. Now top chefs are looking to Alabama thanks to Brent and Rosa Zirlott, their son Lane, and a farm called Murder Point Oysters.

The Zirlotts are no strangers to the fishing industry. The family has lived on the bounty of the Gulf Coast for five generations. They caught oysters as far back as the 1800s, and have been fishing and shrimping in the Gulf of Mexico ever since.

In 2013, as the Zirlotts contemplated new ways to expand their contribution to the seafood industry, they began to explore the uncharted waters of oyster farming. The family participated in farming programs and produced 25,000 oysters as a result. Seeing the potential for oyster farming in the Gulf, the Zirlotts embarked on their own enterprise, producing 500,000 oysters in their farm's inaugural season.

"Farm-raising Gulf oysters is a new

industry," says Lane. "It's worked incredibly well. Now people know it can be done."

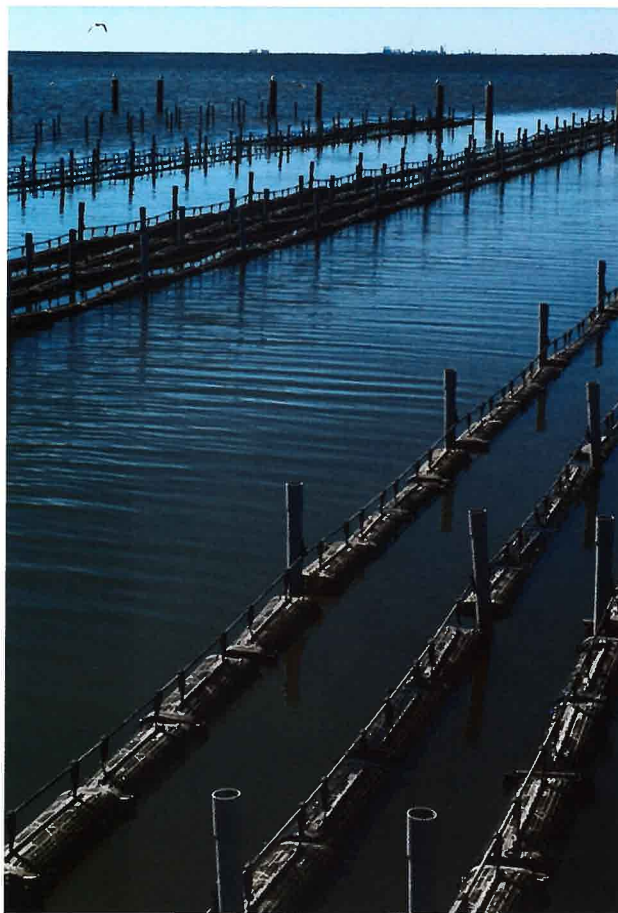
Following the success of their initial efforts, the Zirlott family is preparing to open a second farm later this year. "We're building as we grow," says Rosa. "It's a long process, but with our background, we can adapt quickly."

When the Zirlotts started Murder Point

Oysters, they brought top-of-the-line methods and equipment to the Gulf Coast. Their goal was to produce the best oysters in Alabama waters. "We knew that we could farm the oysters into something special," says Rosa. "We wanted to create something new and unique."

The family utilizes the Australian long-line system of oyster farming. This method keeps the oysters

suspended in the water and off the muddy floor. Long baskets float under water, able to sink and rise to ensure the oysters receive adequate nutrients. "The water here is perfect for raising oysters," says Rosa. "It's rich with nutrients and that makes the growing significantly faster." The baskets are lifted from the



TEXT BY THOMAS LITTLE

water once a week to prevent anything from growing on the oysters.

When the oysters are harvested, they are fed into a tumbler. They emerge with a consistent size and a polished shell. "That's presentation," says Rosa. "The shell is cleaned up and the lower shell, the cup, is kept deep. That leaves room for a plump oyster."

While Alabama's coast is famous for its wonderful seafood, the oysters on our plates have often come from neighboring states. As the Zirlotts' farm-raised fare appears in high-end restaurants around the country, the Alabama oyster has become prized as a pearl.

"Chefs come to us to see what's going on with these Alabama oysters," says

Rosa. "It's awesome to see the whole process from start to finish. They grow here and are served at very nice places near and far."

At home at premium oyster bars and white tablecloth restaurants, the Murder Point oyster

is treasured for its smooth consistency, buttery flavor, and lightly metallic finish.

The Murder Point oysters are in demand all over the United States. They can be found in fine dining venues in New Orleans, Maine, and everywhere in between. Of course,

Alabama chefs have discovered the impeccable quality of these oysters as well.

Murder Point oysters have made their way onto the menus of fine establishments like Fisher's in Orange Beach, The A&P Social in Montgomery, and Hot and Hot Fish Club in Birmingham.

How did such a heavenly oyster get such a sinister name? Rosa recalls an old story about their Mobile waterways.

"Years ago, this area was called Myrtle Point," she says. "Two fishermen started a fight over oyster rights in the area, and it got out of hand." The anecdote has also inspired Murder Point's tongue-in-cheek tagline, "Oysters worth killing for."

WHILE ALABAMA'S COAST
IS FAMOUS FOR ITS
WONDERFUL SEAFOOD,
THE OYSTERS ON OUR PLATES
HAVE OFTEN COME FROM
NEIGHBORING STATES.
AS THE ZIRLOTT'S'
FARM-RAISED FARE APPEARS IN
HIGH-END RESTAURANTS
AROUND THE COUNTRY, THE
ALABAMA OYSTER HAS
BECOME PRIZED AS A PEARL.

