

Where do oysters come from?

Nearly all Pacific Oysters on the market are farmed. Oyster farming requires a deep respect for the environment. All oysters are grown without adding any food or medicine to the water. Oysters spawn (reproduce) when there is a significant change in the water temperature normally during the warm summer months. The spawn creates larvae that "set" on a surface and turn into tiny oyster "seeds".

Are they always safe to eat?

Oysters become unsuitable for consumption when exposed to certain levels of faecal coliform, naturally occurring bacteria (*Vibrio parahaemolyticus*) or algal blooms (red tide or PSP). Oysters grown by certified farmers, such as Mac's, work in conjunction with government regulators to safeguard your customers from this risk.

All oysters must be sold with a tag attached to their master carton or container listing:

- the area and lease # of where they were grown;
- the date of harvest and processing;
- the name of the grower and/or processor.

Shucking Tips

- Place the oyster on a cloth, cupside down, with the hinge end pointed towards you.
- While holding the oyster firmly down with your hand, press the point of the oyster knife firmly into the hinge, twisting the knife. The upper shell should pop open.
- Cut the upper abductor muscle by sliding the knife between the shell and the meat, at the 2 o'clock position (right).
- Remove the top shell.
- Move the knife under the meat to cut the bottom abductor muscle; remove shell fragments, rinse in cold water if necessary. Once opened, oysters on the halfshell should be put on ice to keep them cold.



OYSTER FACTS SHEET



The growing method used and farm location determines the characteristic of the Pacific Oyster.

Beach Oysters:

Oysters are spread out on beaches, size graded by hand a few times per year, and left to grow naturally. Mac's beach oysters are grown in the famous Baynes Sound Oyster Growing Region (Areas 13 and 14), the Discovery Pass Islands off the east coast of Vancouver Island, B.C.

Tray Grown Oysters:

These brands are grown in trays suspended off the ocean floor on rafts or long-lines. The characteristics of a tray product are a deep-cup, clean shell and weak abductor muscle for easy shucking.

Beach Hardened Tray Oysters:

Three to six months prior to harvest the oysters are removed from trays and placed on the beach where exposure to air, waves, and predators, harden the shell.



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Regardless of their brand name and general appearance most oysters grown on the Pacific West Coast, are the species *Crassostrea gigas*, first introduced to these waters from Hokkaido, Japan in the 1930s.

Pacific oysters are graded by size.

The size of the oyster can indicate how it will be consumed. With smaller sizes generally for raw consumption and larger sizes for cooking.

Size	Inches	Color
Petit	1.5" to 2"	Dark Blue
Ex-Small	2" to 2.5"	Light Blue
Small	2.5" to 3.5"	Green
Medium	3.5" to 4.5"	Yellow
Large	5" to 6"	Orange



Types of Cultivated Oysters:

Beach Oysters

These brands are Mac's West Coast classics: Fanny Bay Oysters, Buckley Bay Oysters, Ships Point Oysters, Filongley Oysters, Denman Oysters.

Tray Oysters

Metcalfe Bay Oysters, Pearl Bay Oysters, Sinku Oysters, Summer Ice Oysters.

Beach Hardened Tray Oysters

Phantom Creeks

Shucked Oyster Meats

Beach or long line grown oysters with irregular shapes are shucked live and sold for meat.



Tips on handling live oysters:

Shelf life: When properly cared for live oysters will stay alive from 10 to 21 days.

Are they alive? Shells should close when tapped lightly.

Keep in Moist Environment: Keep oysters cup-down to preserve their natural juices - they need to keep their gills moist to breathe. Avoid storing near moving air (eg. cooling fans). Cover with a moist cloth or keep in the shipping box.

They Will Die when kept in freshwater, or an airtight bag or container.

Temperature Control: Always store live oysters between 2 to 4C (35 to 40F)



Farming methods enable oyster larvae to set suspended in water without attaching to a surface. The oyster seed is then placed into trays, mesh bags, (left) or scattered on a beach. Cultch is oyster seed set on old oyster shells or plastic tubes. The seeded oyster shells can then be braided into rope and suspended in the water or placed on the beach.

Have a question about oysters or clams?

Call the OYSTER HELPLINE **1-800-566-3805**.

For More Information on Mac's Oysters please ask your distributor or visit our website : **www.macsysters.com**.

To order more Oyster Facts sheets please ask your distributor.