

Brief history of the Maine oyster

Ancient shell heaps (or middens) left by ancestors of the native Wabanaki people and fossil oyster shells are evidence that oysters were once much more widespread in the Gulf of Maine. Oyster populations declined due to natural environmental change and pollution from human activities, although remnant populations survived into the twentieth century. In 1949, the state began efforts to re-establish oyster populations, by introducing the European oyster, an effort that was largely unsuccessful. UMaine researcher Herb Hidu brought hatchery technology to the Darling Marine Center in the 1970s and trained Maine's first oyster farmers. In the 1990s, faculty and students re-focused on the native species, *Crassostrea virginica*, developing ways to breed oysters that were better adapted to Maine's cold waters.

The Maine oyster today

Oysters are now an industry worth over \$8 million in Maine, with over a hundred farms producing more than 11 million oysters. Maine has two commercial shellfish hatcheries; oyster farmers purchase juvenile oyster 'seed' or 'spat' from them, and raise the oysters to market size, using a number of different techniques. Some place the juvenile shellfish in plastic mesh bags or cages that float on the water surface; others suspend oysters in trays or cages in the water. Some growers may take small hatchery seed and grow it bigger in bottom cages or bags before free planting on the bottom. They are ready to harvest in two to three years. In several areas, cultured American oysters have reproduced on their own, leading to wild populations that are harvested by licensed commercial fishermen.

Keep oysters cold!

Purchased oysters should be stored in the refrigerator, packed loosely and covered with a damp towel. Eat within 14 days.

Oysters in the market and on the menu are safe, when purchased from a certified shellfish dealer. The old adage about not eating oysters in months without an "R" comes from the days when refrigeration was much less available than today.

Water quality is one of the biggest concerns of the oyster farmer. While the filter-feeding oysters themselves actually help to keep the water clear, oysters are vulnerable to bacterial pollution, chemical contamination, and harmful algal blooms (red tide), especially spring through fall. Check with the Department of Marine Resources for shellfish growing area closures; 800.232.4733 or 207.624.7727.

Eating raw oysters presents some risk of exposure to viruses and bacteria, especially for people with compromised immune systems.

Where to eat

List is not complete; check oystertrailmaine.org for the latest updates!

Roberts Maine Grill, Kittery
Hurricane Restaurant, Kennebunkport
Earth at Hidden Pond, Kennebunkport
50 Local, Kennebunk
Jumpin Jakes, Old Orchard Beach
Black Point Inn, Scarborough
O'Oysters, S. Portland
555, Portland
Street & Co, Portland
El Rayo Taqueria, Portland
Old Port Sea Grill & Raw Bar, Portland
Eventide Oyster Co., Portland
Fore Street, Portland
Boone's Fish House and Oyster Room, Portland
Scales, Portland
BP's Shuck Shack, Portland
J's Oyster Bar, Portland
Katahdin, Portland
Union in the Press Hotel, Portland
Hot Suppa!, Portland
Central Provisions, Portland
Royal River Grillhouse, Yarmouth
Bistro 233, Yarmouth
Tao Yuan, Brunswick
Brunswick Inn, Brunswick
Salt Pine Social, Bath
Anchor Bar and Grill, Georgetown
Robinhood Free Meetinghouse, Georgetown
Gray Havens Inn, Georgetown
Mine Oyster Raw Bar, Boothbay Harbor
Newcastle Publik House, Newcastle
Shuck Station, Newcastle
Schooner Landing, Damariscotta
King Eider's Pub, Damariscotta
Damariscotta River Grill, Damariscotta
The Anchor, Round Pond
The Slipway, Thomaston
Cafe Miranda, Rockland
Suzuki's Sushi Bar, Rockland
Landings, Rockland
Nebo Lodge, North Haven
18 Central Oyster Bar, Rockport
Waterfront, Camden
Rhumb Line, Camden
McLaughlin's, Lincolnville
Three Tides, Belfast
Blaze Restaurant, Bangor
Aragosta, Stonington
Arborvine/Deepwater Brewing, Blue Hill
The Barnacle, Bar Harbor
Fish House Grill, Bar Harbor
Blaze Restaurant, Bar Harbor
Sweet Pea's Cafe, Bar Harbor
Crocker House Country Inn, Hancock
Ironbound, Hancock
Corea Wharf Gallery, Corea

Where can I buy Maine oysters?

Maine oysters are available year-round, directly from some oyster farms (indicated by a \$ on the map) and from local seafood markets, including:

JP Shellfish, Eliot
Harbor Fish Market, Portland
Browne Trading Market, Portland
Free Range Fish & Lobster, Portland
Fisherman's Catch, Damariscotta
Jess's Market, Rockland
Maine Maritime Products, Belfast
Peekytoe Provisions, Bar Harbor

About the Oyster Trail

The Oyster Trail of Maine is an ongoing initiative of Maine Sea Grant, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Maine Aquaculture Association, Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center, and In A Half Shell. Learn more and access an online map at oystertrailmaine.org.

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Oyster Trail of Maine



oystertrailmaine.org



The Oyster Trail of Maine

The native American or Eastern oyster is produced primarily via aquaculture. In 2018, over 100 commercial oyster farms leased or licensed approximately 650 acres of coastal water from the state. Some farms may have multiple lease sites.



- Oyster Trail of Maine farm locations
- \$ Direct sales from the farm
- + Offers tours (contact company for details)

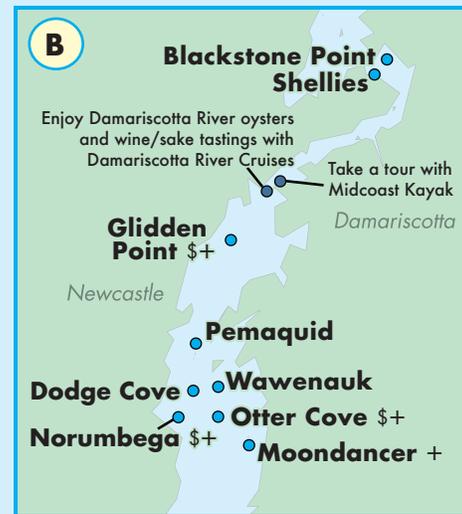
Please note... Oyster farms are private businesses. Please call ahead before visiting and be respectful of farmers at work on the water.

Pope's Creek

Cape Neddick



Most Maine oyster farms grow the same species, *Crassostrea virginica*, although some production of the European flat or Belon oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) also occurs. Oysters vary widely in appearance due to their growing conditions. Oysters feed by filtering algae and other particles from the water. The look and taste of oysters varies from river to river depending on what kind of algae they eat, culture technique, and water flow, temperature and salinity. Maine's clean, cold waters produce high quality oysters. Market names vary, though typically correspond to the growing location.



Explore the Oyster Trail

Explore the Oyster Trail ~ learn where to eat and buy Maine oysters, take a tour of an oyster farm, and learn more about this \$8 million industry that is part of Maine's working waterfront.

Visit oystertrailmaine.org for details.