

For Consumers of Molluscan Shellfish (Oysters, Clams, Mussels, and Scallops)

Shellfish are a versatile and delicious source of nutritious food. They are high in protein, low in calories, sodium, fat, and cholesterol. Shellfish are also a good source of vitamins and minerals. Clams, oysters, and mussels can be quick and easy to prepare, especially when served raw. However, there are certain risks associated with eating raw shellfish. By knowing what precautions to take, consumers can make an educated choice about shellfish consumption.

Key Points:

- Know the source: Obtain shellfish from approved sources. Ask the seafood market personnel to show you the certified shipper's tag that accompanies whole products or check the shipper number on shucked oyster containers.
- DO NOT cross-contaminate: handle raw and cooked seafood separately. Thoroughly clean and rinse containers, utensils, and work spaces after use. Keep raw and cooked seafood from coming in contact with each other.



Handling Shellfish

- **Keep shellfish cold!** If shellfish temperatures are allowed to rise above 50 degrees for a few hours, bacteria may multiply and safe shellfish may become unsafe to eat. This is especially important in summer months where warm temperatures provide the perfect conditions for these bacteria to thrive.
- When purchasing shellfish, bring a cooler and an ice pack and get them refrigerated, at less than 45°F, as soon as possible.
- Never store shellfish in water as they may die and spoil.
- If shellfish are gaping and don't clamp shut when tapped, they are probably dead and should be thrown away.

Storing Shellfish

- Raw, unshucked shellfish: All fresh shellfish should be stored in an open container in the refrigerator. Place a damp towel on top to maintain humidity. Storage times for shellfish vary, for example:
 - Oysters → *7 days*
 - Quahogs → *7 days*
 - Blue Mussels → *4 days*
 - Soft shell clams → *use immediately*
 - Razor clams → *within a day*

- Shucked Shellfish: shellfish removed from their shells will keep in a refrigerator for up to three days. In a freezer, they will keep for up to three months.
- Cooked Shellfish: cooked shellfish can be kept in the refrigerator for up to two days and in a freezer up to three months.
- Thawed Shellfish: shellfish taken from the freezer and thawed in a refrigerator will keep for up to two days. Once thawed, do not refreeze.



Cooking with Shellfish

The only way to determine if shellfish has reached a safe internal temperature of 145°F is to measure it with a thin-tip thermometer. This will provide the most accurate cooking temperature.

Additional recommendations include:

- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) suggests boiling shucked oysters for 3 minutes, frying them in oil at 375°F for 10 minutes, or baking them at 450°F for 10 minutes.
- Clams, mussels and oysters in the shell will open when cooked. The FDA suggests steaming oysters for 4 to 9 minutes or boiling them for 3 to 5 minutes after they open.
- Depending on size, scallops take 3 to 4 minutes to cook thoroughly.

Keep in mind that some people are at greater risk for foodborne illness, and should not eat raw or partially cooked fish or shellfish. These susceptible groups include:

- Pregnant women
- Young children
- Older adults
- Persons whose immune systems are compromised
- Persons who have decreased stomach acidity

If you are unsure of your risk, ask your healthcare provider. If you feel ill after consuming raw shellfish, contact your primary care physician for evaluation and assessment.



This information has been compiled by the Connecticut Sea Grant Extension Program with permission from the following sources:

Connecticut Department of Agriculture Bureau of Aquaculture, Connecticut Department of Public Health, Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection, University of Delaware Sea Grant College Program, Washington State Department of Public Health, and FDA.

For more information contact the Connecticut Department of Agriculture Bureau of Aquaculture at 203-874-0696.

For additional information and great recipes check out the following websites:

www.ecsga.org

www.seafoodhealthfacts.org

<http://www.seagrant.uconn.edu/>



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SAFE HANDLING, STORAGE, AND COOKING PRACTICES

