



This brochure, characterizing regional Virginia oyster tastes, is the result of work done by eight panelists who met eighteen times, from January to March 2011, to taste oysters. All panel members were oyster lovers, but none had previously tasted oysters in an organized manner. The panel was made up of chefs, oyster sellers, scientists and a restaurant critic. All of them were folks who never pass on a chance to taste half-shell oysters. There were six sensory training sessions and 12 oyster tasting sessions. A representative oyster from each region was blind tasted several times. The reported numbers are the group averages from those tastings.

Eating Raw Seafood

Eating any under cooked protein such as oysters carries a higher food safety risk than eating it thoroughly cooked.

People, such as pregnant women, older adults, and people with chronic illness should not eat raw or partially cooked shellfish.

The brochure is only a rough guide to the regional tastes of Virginia oysters.

When selecting oysters make sure you ask for Virginia oysters.

Visit our website at www.virginiaseafood.org to view the video on “How to Shuck a Virginia Oyster” and recipes. A suppliers directory of the Virginia Aquaculture Oyster Growers is available on our website.



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A Guide to the Flavors of Virginia Oysters

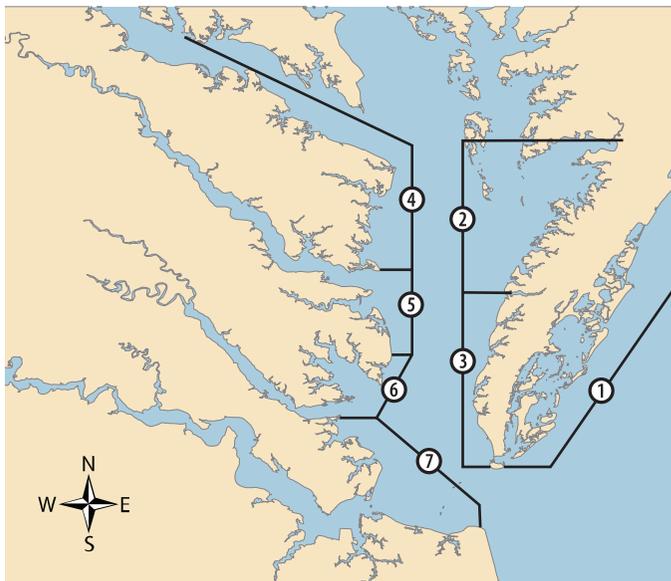
Virginia’s oysters are as unique and varied as the waters from which they are harvested. Oysters directly reflect place and take their tastes from the location where they are cultured. Our coastal waters include a range of salinities from the briny Atlantic to the sweet water of Virginia’s upper Chesapeake on the western shore and all combinations between. The dynamic nature of our tidal waters also influences the flavors of an oyster from the same location throughout the year. Oysters from the same grower can be different every time you enjoy them.

Tasting Virginia Oysters

To enjoy the many flavors of a Virginia oyster, you need to chew it a number of times or you’ll miss the subtle tastes. After the initial salt, you will often notice a light creamy/butter flavor of different intensities and then a sweetness. The finish varies depending on the oyster and the time of year.



The Seven Regions of the Chesapeake Bay



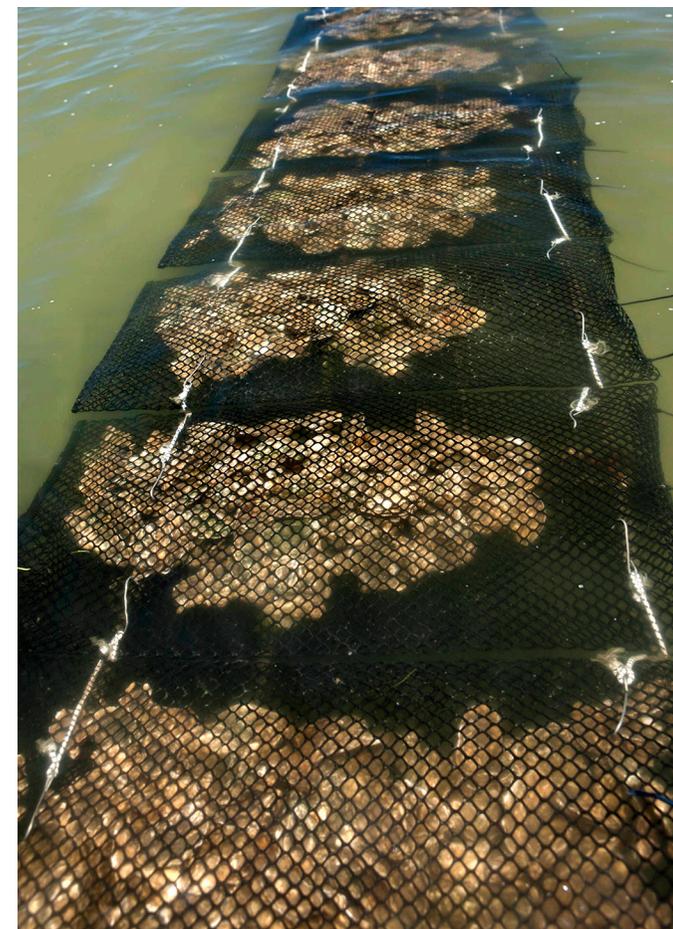
Oyster Guide

Saltiness	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨
Buttery/Creamy	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨
Sweetness	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

- 1-2 : Barely Perceptible
- 3-4 : Slightly
- 5-6 : Moderate
- 7-8 : Very Noticeable
- 9 : Strong

Benefits of Eating Oysters

Omega-3 fatty acids such as DHA and EPA found in oysters can contribute to a healthy heart. Oysters provide 0.37 – 1.17 grams of omega-3 fatty acids per 3 oz. serving.



Oyster Characteristics by Region

Region	Salinity Range	Saltiness	Buttery/Creamy	Sweetness	Comments
#1 Seaside	28-32	⑨	③	③	Initial bold saltiness mellowing into a taste of sweet butter/cream at the finish.
#2 Upper Bay Eastern Shore	16-18	⑤	①	③	Classic Virginia Bay oyster flavor with balanced salt and sweet, with a savory finish.
#3 Lower Bay Eastern Shore	18-22	⑦	③	③	Salty and creamy with mellow sweetness and a quick finish.
#4 Upper Bay Western Shore	10-17	⑤	②	②	Sweetwater oyster with a light cream taste.
#5 Middle Bay Western Shore	16-18	⑤	③	③	Lightly salty with easily distinguished cream or butter and a pleasant slight minerality.
#6 Lower Bay Western Shore	16-18	⑤	②	②	Mild saltiness moving to a sweet finish.
#7 Tidewater	16-30	⑧	②	③	Salty oyster with sweetness and a smooth finish.

Sustainability

Oysters are being raised in cages or on private reefs. They are harvested from healthy populations in an environmentally friendly way and are available year round to keep up with consumer demand.