

Guidance on Handling of Live Oysters at Retail and Catering Outlets

Handling and serving live oysters is different to handling and serving other ready-to-eat foods. You need to look after a live animal and ensure that it remains alive until it is either eaten or cooked. In the event of an incident or recall it is essential to be able to trace oysters back to the dispatch centre they came from.

These notes will help you to maintain traceability and maintain your oysters in the best condition so that the health and satisfaction of your customers is safeguarded.

Traceability

- All packages of live oysters must be accompanied by a dated health/ID mark on an indelible, water resistant label like the one shown below.
- This label shows the identification number of the establishment from which they may have come (in the ellipse), ideally a batch number, date of packaging and declaration that animals must be alive when sold. Alternatively, a minimum durability date could be used.
- These details should be sufficient to identify the actual bed from which the oysters were harvested. Keep the health mark details for at least 60 days in case this information is needed. The easiest way to do this is to affix the label into your diary on the day of delivery.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31											
I.D/Healthmark Crassostrea Gigas – Rock Oysters																																									
Date of Dispatch										UK IE 003 EC																															
29/12/2010																																									
Batch – 1026																																									
THESE ANIMALS MUST BE ALIVE WHEN SOLD																																									
Jan										Feb										Mar										Apr											
May										Jun										Jul										Aug											
Sep										Oct										Nov										Dec											

Try to avoid using oysters from different suppliers at the same time, but if this is unavoidable devise your own method of being able to identify who ate oysters from which supplier.

Reception/delivery

Check that the packages of oysters are closed & labelled as above. If there is no label, bearing the required information, attached to the packaging reject the consignment. Where possible check that the vehicle is clean and that the oysters have not been mixed with raw fish or kept in hot and dirty conditions.

Storage

- Store the oysters in a deep bowl (to prevent leaks) and away from other open foods. Do not store below raw meat or fish.
- Keep them cool (ideally 4°C – 8°C) Do NOT re-immerses oysters in water. They will have been properly purified at the depuration centre and any further immersion risks re-contaminating them.
- Do not seal live oysters in an airtight container - they will not be able to breathe and will die.
- Do not store on ice – they may die.
- The display and keeping of oysters on seaweed is discouraged.

Handling

- Wash (and dry) your hands thoroughly using warm soapy water, before handling and opening the oysters.
- Ensure that the knives and other equipment (including gloves if you wear them) used for opening the oysters are all clean before you start.
- Check that the outside shells of the oysters are clean and avoid pushing any mud or bits of shell into the oyster as you open it.
- Use a cleaned or different shucking knife for each batch.
- Serve promptly. Ideally only shuck oysters to order.

Food Handlers Fitness to work

- It is important to ensure that any food handlers suffering from gastrointestinal illness are excluded from work relating to food handling duties and that they cannot enter a food handling area. This exclusion is usually for 48 hours after an individual no longer shows symptoms of illness. This is particularly important when handling products that are served raw, such as oysters.
- Bacteria and viruses can still be found in someone's faeces after symptoms stop. It is therefore important that managers continue to exclude food handlers for a period of time after this. It is recommended that people should be excluded for 48 hours after they stop showing symptoms of diarrhoea.
- In the event of your customers informing you that they have been ill as a result of eating oysters at your premises, contact your local Environmental Health Officer and provide details of the relevant label.

Further information

Information on oysters and other shellfish can be found on the internet at:

www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/farmingfood/shellfish/,
www.seafish.org/ www.shellfish.org.uk/
http://www.shellfish.org.uk/how_to_videos.htm

Details on food handlers' fitness to work can be found at:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/fitnesstoworkguide09v3.pdf>