Aquaculture Oysters: *Crassostrea virginica*

**Market forms:** Live in shell, fresh shucked (in pints, quarts or gallons), frozen (breaded and unbreaded) and frozen half shell.

**Marketing:** History has proven that the salinity levels of Virginia waters (the mixture of fresh water from the Appalachian Mountain Range, mixing with the Atlantic Ocean) makes the taste of Virginia oysters superior to other states. Virginia’s location also gives our oysters moderate winters and cool summers, which helps Virginia oysters and extends their growing season.

**Size:** Market size is approximately 3 inches for oysters in the shell. Shucked oysters are designated according to size ranging from the largest "counts" to smallest "standards."

- small - over 500 meats/gallon
- standard - 301 to 500 meats/gallon
- select - 211 to 300 meats/gallon
- extra select - 160 to 210 meats/gallon
- count - under 160 meats/gallon

**Taste/texture:** Plump, delicate, tender, slightly salty.

**Seasonality:** Available year round.

**Nutritional Value:**
- 69 Calories (100 grams, 3.5 oz.)
- 7.1% Protein
- 2.5% Fat
- .44% Omega-3

**Substitutability:** Nothing else tastes quite like *Crassostrea virginica*, so named because biologists first identified it on Virginia’s shores. In fact, in blind taste comparisons with its Pacific cousin, the Eastern oyster was voted best tasting by 85% of those polled.

**Habitat:** Oysters grow best in estuarine waters of moderate temperature and salinity with abundant plankton for food. This description best fits the Chesapeake Bay and its major tributaries which are responsible for high yields of this shellfish.

**Harvesting:** The harvesting of aquaculture grown oysters are from private grounds either from cages or private reefs. This provides a ready supply for market.

For more information, contact the Virginia Marine Products Board, 554 Denbigh Blvd., Suite B, Newport News, VA 23608, at 757-874-3474 or Fax 757-886-0671 or visit our web site at [www.virginiaseafood.org](http://www.virginiaseafood.org)