

Oyster bar craze – keeping it safe

The popularity of oyster bars is exploding. Epicures are frequent visitors of these trendy establishments. Just like fine wine experts, discriminating palates of oyster bar patrons command only the finest flavors. Although it takes an extremely trained eye to identify an oyster by its appearance, the flavors do vary and the more experienced clientele notice the subtleties amongst the varieties.

Along with the growing demand for shell oysters comes the concern of safety. Because oysters are bivalve mollusks, their bodies, or meat, are filters which can carry bacteria. *Vibrio vulnificus* is the most common virus found in oysters. The industry has developed safety precautions to minimize the chances of infected oysters reaching the table.

Regulations begin at the harvest stage with strict vessel requirements in place. Harvesters of shell oysters that are not going to go through any further processing must be “White Tagged.” White tagged oysters are just that, labeled with a white tag certifying they have been refrigerated on board and kept at 45 degrees or below and must be refrigerated within a certain time frame depending on the time of year (See specific details below). They are used for raw consumption. Studies have shown that keeping oysters at a certain temperature greatly reduces the chance of carrying *Vibrio* bacteria.

Green tagged oysters, which have restricted uses, can also make their way into the live shell market. On board refrigeration is not required, however, they MUST go through some further processing to be sold into the live shell market.

Freezing, low heat pasteurization, high pressure treatment or radiation are used in processing plants to reduce *Vibrio* bacteria to non-detectable levels and in all processes the oyster remains alive. Most of the green tagged oysters are shucked and sold as meat.



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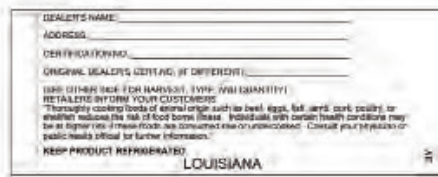
White and green tag restrictive guidelines have been set by Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries with strict enforcement. As recent as June 13, 2014 the guidelines have been modified so no vessel is able to carry both white and green tagged oysters. All vessels carrying white tagged oysters are restricted to harvesting and meeting the requirements for white tagged oysters only. The same guidelines hold true for green tagged oyster vessels so there is no crossover on board any one boat.

A growing number of connoisseurs are indulging with confidence. Enforced guidelines and restrictions help to reduce the risk of *Vibrio* outbreaks. **UB**

Article contributed by MaryAnn Zicarelli | maryann@urnerbarry.com

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White Tag



Description & Use
For raw consumption.

Refrigeration Air Temperature
Less than or equal to 45° F.

Requirements

Months	Hours Until Refrigeration	Internal Meat Temperature
Dec, Jan, Feb	36	10 hrs to 55° F
Mar, Apr, Nov	8	10 hrs to 55° F
May to October	1	6 hrs to 55° F

Source: Louisiana Department of wildlife and Fisheries

Green Tag



Description & Use
Must be consumed fully cooked. For shucking or Post-Harvest Processing (PHP) ONLY.

Refrigeration Air Temperature
Must be less than or equal to 45° F.

Requirements

Months	Hours Until Refrigeration	Internal Meat Temperature
Dec, Jan, Feb	24 hours	Can't ship until internal temp. is 50° F or less, unless trip is under 4 hours. If temp. is not met, shipment can occur with a time / temp monitoring device.
Mar - May & Oct - Nov	18 Hours	
June - Sept	12 Hours	