

Oyster Myths PEARLS

Most of us have heard that eating oysters in months without an “R” in the spelling can be deadly! That means that Oyster Lovers can’t get their fix in the months between April and September. Well this “R Myth,” as it has been called, goes back to the “pre-R era” on the world’s culinary calendar, that “R” being refrigeration.

In the past, many seafood stores would display “oysters R in Season” signs, which help reinforce this myth. Although the slogan is clever, it doesn’t ring accurate since oysters may be eaten year round. Oysters do reproduce from May through August, and though in some instances they may not be as plump or tasty as during the “R” months, it’s certainly safe to eat them as long as they have been properly refrigerated and purchased from a reputable vendor.

A few mythical claims not tested by the FDA or by us: “Nature’s Viagra,” “Eat Oysters, Love Longer!”

Oysters were first served to the public in this country in 1763 when a primitive saloon was opened in New York City in a Broad Street cellar.

In the 19th century, the American people were enveloped in an oyster craze. In every town there were oyster parlors, oyster cellars, oyster saloons, oyster bars, oyster houses, oyster stalls and oyster lunchrooms.

Our “Oys-terrific September” has become very



popular. It’s a chance to taste some of the different varieties. Oysters are expensive but here at the Chowder House you can get better values than at many of the big city oyster bars.

In “A Moveable Feast,” Ernest Hemingway’s post-humously published work celebrating its 50th year since first publication, he writes: “As I ate the oysters with their strong taste of the sea and their faint metallic taste that the cold white wine washed away, leaving only the sea taste and the succulent texture, and as I drank their liquid from each shell and washed it down with the crisp taste of the wine, I lost the empty feeling and began to be happy and to make plans.” Probably not Ernie’s best constructed (or edited) sentence, but at the same time we all need occasion to lose that empty feeling, begin to be happy and to make plans. So, order some half shells, shuck, slurp, toast and get planning.