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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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(Food Editors)

OYSTERS IN THE HOLIDAY MENU

As the holiday season brings the year's heaviest demand for oysters, abundant market supplies throughout the country assure that there will be plenty to go around for the traditional holiday uses in cocktails, stews, and poultry dressing, the Fish and Wildlife Service reports.

Although fall storms in certain areas, especially on the Gulf Coast, destroyed oyster beds and interfered with production, oyster fishermen on both coasts have been busy since the season opened in September harvesting the year's crop of this tasty shellfish. During the cold winter months of December and January, oysters reach their peak of plumpness and flavor and are then in greatest demand. During the Christmas holiday season, their place of honor at family dinners, parties, church suppers, and banquets is traditional.

Home economists of the Fish and Wildlife Service point out that oysters, being readily digested, are particularly adapted to use during the Christmas season of heavy eating. In cocktails, they whet the appetite for the treat to come; for the main dish, they combine superbly with the fowl as oyster stuffing. Oyster stew or oyster bisque is a favorite supper dish for the holidays.

The following suggestions for buying and preparing oysters for holiday meals are offered by home economists of the Service:

Oysters may be purchased in three forms: live in the shell, fresh or frozen shucked; and canned. Oysters in the shell are generally sold by the dozen and should be alive when purchased. Gaping shells that do not close when handled, indicate that the oysters are dead and no longer usable. If shell oysters are held at 40 degrees, they will remain alive for a week or two.

Shucked oysters should be plump, and have a natural creamy color with clear liquor. When kept properly refrigerated, they will remain fresh for a week or ten days. Frozen oysters should not be thawed until ready for use. Once thawed, they should not be refrozen.

The quantity to purchase depends on how the oysters are to be served. For six persons, allow three dozen shell oysters, or one quart of shucked oysters, or two No. 1 cans of canned oysters. Shucked oysters are entirely edible, as there is no wastage from trimmings.

OYSTER COCKTAIL

1 1/2 pints oysters
Lettuce
Cocktail sauce
Lemon wedges

Drain and dry oysters. Allow six oysters for each serving and arrange in lettuce cups on individual salad plates. In the center of each plate, place a small container of cocktail sauce. Garnish with lemon. Serves 6.

COCKTAIL SAUCE

1 Cup catsup
2 tablespoons vinegar
1 tablespoon horse-radish
1 tablespoon celery, minced
1 tablespoon onion, minced
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
Few drops of Tabasco sauce

Blend all ingredients and chill.

TOMATO OYSTER BISQUE

1 pint oysters
1 quart milk
1 slice onion
4 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon flour
2 1/2 teaspoons salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1 can condensed tomato soup

Drain oysters, and chop. Add liquor, and heat slowly to boiling point. Scald milk with slice of onion. Melt butter in top of double boiler, blend in the flour, add milk, and cook until thick, stirring constantly. Add oysters, seasonings, tomato soup, and heat to boiling point. Serve immediately with croutons. Serves 6.

OYSTER STUFFING FOR CHICKEN

1 pint oysters
1/2 cup celery, chopped
1/2 cup onion, chopped
4 tablespoons butter
4 cups day old bread cubes
1 tablespoon parsley, chopped
1 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon poultry seasoning
1/8 teaspoon pepper

Drain oysters, saving liquor, and chop. Cook celery and onion in butter until tender. Combine oysters, cooked vegetables, bread cubes, and seasonings, and mix thoroughly. If stuffing seems dry, moisten with oyster liquor. Makes enough for a 4 pound chicken.

OYSHER STUFFING FOR TURKEY

For 10-15 lb. turkey	3 times above recipe
For 16-20 lb. turkey	4 times above recipe
For 21-25 lb. turkey	5 times above recipe

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