

## A Guide to Virginia Flavors

Virginia's oysters are unique and varied as the waters from which they are harvested. Oysters directly reflect place and take their tastes from the location where they are cultured. Our coastal waters include a range of salinities from the briny Atlantic to the sweet water of Virginia's upper Chesapeake on the western shore and all combinations in between. The dynamic nature of our tidal waters also influences the flavors of an oyster from the same location throughout the year. Oysters from the same grower can be different every time you enjoy them.



## Eating Raw Seafood

Eating any under cooked protein such as oysters carries a higher food safety risk than eating it thoroughly cooked.

People, such as pregnant women, older adults, and people with chronic illness should not eat raw or partially cooked shellfish.

The brochure is only a rough guide to the regional tastes of Virginia oysters. When selecting oysters make sure you ask for Virginia oysters.

Visit our website to view the video on "How to Shuck a Virginia Oyster" and recipes. A supplier's directory of the Virginia Aquaculture Oyster Growers is available on our website.

[virginiaoysters.org](http://virginiaoysters.org)  
[virginiaseafood.org](http://virginiaseafood.org)



This brochure, characterizing regional Virginia oyster tastes, is the result of work done by eight panelists who met twenty-one times to taste oysters. All panel members were oyster lovers, but none had previously tasted oysters in an organized manner. The panel was made up of chefs, oyster sellers, scientists and a restaurant critic. All of them were folks who never pass on a chance to taste half-shell oysters. There were six sensory training sessions and fifteen oyster tasting sessions.

A representative oyster from each region was blind tasted several times. The reported numbers are the group averages from those tastings.

The sensory panel was organized and directed by scientists at the Virginia Tech Virginia Seafood Agriculture Research and Extension Center in Hampton, Virginia.



### Virginia Marine Products Board

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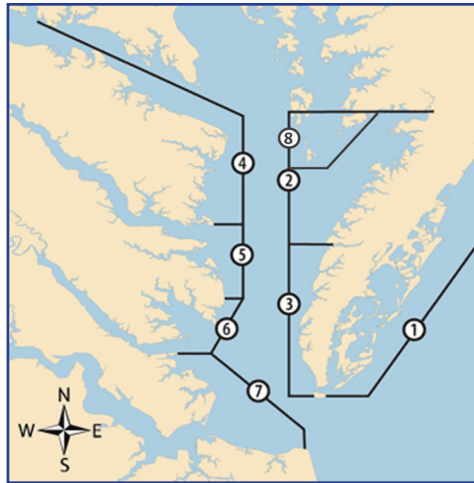
## A Guide to the Flavors of VIRGINIA OYSTERS



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## The Eight Regions of the Chesapeake Bay



## Tasting Virginia Oysters

To enjoy the many flavors of a Virginia oyster, you need to chew it a number of times or you'll miss the subtle tastes. After the initial salt, you will often notice a light creamy/butter flavor of different intensities and then a sweetness. The finish varies depending on the oyster.

### Oyster Guide

| Saltiness      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Buttery/Creamy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Sweetness      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |

1-2: Barely Perceptible  
 3-4: Slightly  
 5-6: Moderate  
 7-8: Very Noticeable  
 9: Strong

## Benefits of Eating Oysters

Omega-3 fatty acids such as DHA and EPA found in oysters can contribute to a healthy heart. Oysters provide 0.37 – 1.17 grams of omega-3 fatty acids per 3 oz. serving.



### Sustainability

Oysters are being raised in cages or on private reefs. They are harvested from healthy populations in an environmentally friendly way and are available year round to keep up with consumer demand.

### Oyster Characteristics by Region

| Region                           | Salinity Range | Saltiness | Buttery/Creamy | Sweetness | Comments   |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|--|
| #1 Seaside                       | 28-32          | 9         | 3              | 3         | Initial bold saltiness mellowing into a taste of sweet butter/cream at the finish.                         |
| #2 Upper Bay Eastern Shore       | 16-18          | 5         | 1              | 3         | Classic Virginia bay oyster flavor with balanced salt and sweet with a savory finish.                      |
| #3 Lower Bay Eastern Shore       | 18-22          | 7         | 3              | 3         | Salty and Creamy with mellow sweetness and a quick finish.   |
| #4 Upper Bay Western Shore       | 10-17          | 5         | 2              | 2         | Sweetwater oyster with a light cream taste.  |
| #5 Middle Bay Western Shore      | 16-18          | 5         | 3              | 3         | Lightly salty with easily distinguished cream or butter and a pleasant slight minerality.                  |
| #6 Lower Bay Western Shore       | 16-18          | 5         | 2              | 2         | Mild saltiness moving to a sweet finish.   |
| #7 Tidewater                     | 16-30          | 8         | 2              | 2         | Salty oyster with a sweetness and a smooth finish.   |
| #8 Tangier/Middle Chesapeake Bay | 16-18          | 5         | 5              | 4         | Traditional Virginia Bay Oyster flavor with a balance of salt and sweet, and a savory butter/cream finish. |