



Pangea Shellfish Company
Shellfish Handling Guidelines

Last updated September 2019

LET'S DO OUR PART

The safe consumption of shellfish relies heavily on how shellfish is handled before consumption. It is our jobs as shellfish handlers and food service establishments to ensure the safety of our customers by following safe handling practices and storage guidelines.

The following are best practices in handling and storing shellfish. Please educate your staff and team members. Together, we can minimize foodborne illnesses and allow many to continue enjoying shellfish.



GENERAL FOOD SAFETY WARNING

Thoroughly cooking foods of animal origin such as shellfish reduces the risk of foodborne illness. Individuals with certain health conditions such as liver disease, chronic alcohol abuse, diabetes, cancer, stomach, blood or immune disorders may be at a higher risk if these foods are consumed raw or undercooked. Consult your physician or public health officials for further information.

SHELLSTOCK

1. Only accept shellfish products when the temperature of the shellstock is 45° F or under. Measure shellfish temperatures by using an infrared thermometer or inserting a needle probe thermometer into the center of the bag.
2. Keep shellstock separate from finfish and other seafood.
3. Refrigerate and maintain shellstock temperature at 45° F or under. The temperature of the refrigerated cooler should stay between 38 - 45° F at all times.
4. Handle shellfish gently. Shells can crack or chip resulting in reduced liquor content and shorter shelf life.
5. All **shucked** shellfish should be buried in ice at all times. The ideal storage temperature is 32 - 34° F.
6. Pack all shellstock shipments with adequate ice.
7. Keep all shellstock tags on file for 90 days.
8. If shellstock has been subject to temperature abuse, please discard immediately.

OYSTERS

1. Keep oysters cold, not just cool – ideally 36 - 40° F. *Vibrio* and other bacteria can grow exponentially when temperatures are over 50° F.
2. Ice oysters down, especially Pacific oysters because they have a shorter shelf life. There should always be proper drainage for ice melt, so oysters do not sit in stagnant, fresh water.
3. The ideal way to store oysters is “cup up” like a wine glass. This allows the oyster’s liquor to remain in its cup for as long as possible. Unfortunately, this isn’t always practical in most commercial cases, so handling them gently to avoid shell chipping will be most effective for shelf life and liquor retention.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are five edible oyster species in North America, and each species has a different shelf life. Oysters can stay alive out of the water and in a cooler for months, though their flavor may not be as fresh.

Recommended shelf life for Eastern oysters from the Atlantic is generally 2+ weeks from harvest.

Recommended shelf life for Pacific oysters is generally 1+ week from harvest. Icing Pacific oysters can extend this shelf life.

WHAT IS VIBRIO?

Vibrio Parahaemolyticus and *Vibrio Vulnificus* are strains of bacteria that occur naturally in the ocean and thrive in warm temperatures. At low concentrations, they are harmless, but at high enough levels, *Vibrio* can cause illness when consumed. The bacteria can grow exponentially and bioaccumulate in oysters when temperatures reach over 50° F. Maintaining constant temperature control of 45° F or below reduces the risk of foodborne illnesses related to *Vibrio*.



MUSSELS

1. Heavily bury mussels in ice.
Mussels need the pressure and cold temperatures to stay closed and fresh. Leaving them on a bed of ice is not recommended.
2. Always provide proper drainage at all times. Mussels must not sit in stagnant or fresh water. If left in water, they will try to breathe or graze, resulting in death and a short shelf life.



DID YOU KNOW?

An open mussel isn't necessarily dead. Unlike oysters, mussels like to gape for air to maintain oxygen levels. The best ways to check a mussel is to give it a squeeze, sprinkle a little salt, or mist it with cold water. If it moves to close, then it's still alive. If it remains open, it's likely dead and needs to be discarded.

CLAMS

1. Handle all clams gently. Both hard shell and soft shell clams crack very easily, which will ultimately kill the clam.
2. Bury Pacific clams in ice with proper drainage. This is especially crucial during spawn season, which will help extend their shelf life.

DID YOU KNOW?

Littlenecks, midnecks, topnecks, cherrystones, and quahogs are actually all the same clam, but marketed at different sizes. Smaller clams are typically consumed raw and used in appetizers. Larger clams are typically stuffed, baked or chopped up.

