

## Sweet, creamy, salty or briny: How does Annapolis like its oysters?



**Wendi Winters** Contact Reporter  
wwinters@capgaznews.com

What is your favorite kind of oyster? Is it a dainty slurp or a big gulp? Do you prefer the merest hint of salty or a fuller, briny bite? Or perhaps you like bivalve with a creamy aftertaste of melon?

Aw shucks, you say. There's different types of oysters? Yes, there are. Oysters sold in the Annapolis area this time of year are shipped fresh from both coasts of the United States and Canada. Each variety of the three major species has its devoted fans.

Saturday is National Oyster Day, but people living on the Chesapeake Bay munch, gobble and slurp year-round. Raw, steamed, fried, smoked, grilled, pickled, roasted, stewed or in a slider — they disappear quickly no matter the season.

Plenty of restaurants will have specials for National Oyster Day, but there's one big one to look out for: Some participating eateries will donate 10 cents from every oyster sold to the [Oyster Recovery Partnership](#). Every oyster you eat at these restaurants will help fund the planting of 10 baby oysters onto sanctuary reefs in the Chesapeake Bay.



## **Blackwall Beauty**

Blackwall Hitch in Eastport — there are locations in Alexandria, Virginia, and Rehoboth Beach, Delaware — serves up a minimum of 1,000 oysters weekly. War Shore Oyster is the restaurant's supplier for the blue point oysters, Battle Creek oysters and the restaurant's own brand of oyster called Blackwall Beauty.

"We held a contest to name our own oyster brand," executive chef Jonathan Seningen said. "It was conducted in the restaurant with people filling out flyers and online on our website and social media."

The Blackwall Beauty oyster, from Chincoteague Island, is medium-sized, meaty with a slightly salty taste. It is raised in one area, then "dipped" in more saline water closer to the Atlantic Ocean for two weeks to adjust its taste.

He pointed to two different oysters in a tray. The blue point, harvested from Long Island to Connecticut, has a smooth rounded shell with a hint of blue.

The Blackwall Beauty has "a deep cup and fluted lip, plus it has a vertical stripe." Sure enough, the shell looked like someone used a Sharpie to draw a ragged black line across the shell.

Before coming to Blackwall Hitch, Seningen had established the oyster program at the Walrus Oyster and Ale House in National Harbor. There, the menu offered 14 different daily varieties. Too much, he feels, for most customers. They just want to know how it tastes.



From his point of view, oysters from the Chesapeake Bay area look similar, while West Coast oysters tend to be smaller with a deeper cup. The sunberry point oysters from Prince Edward Island are, he said, "small, nutrient-rich, cold Olympians."

The Belon oysters, from Maine, are European flat oysters originally imported from the Belon River estuary in Brittany, France. "They're very salty," Seningen said, "while the West Coast oysters taste different, they're compared to cucumbers and melons."

"What a customer wants to ask their server about the oysters they are ordering is, 'Are they sweet, medium, salty or briny?' " he said.

