

Safely Storing Oysters, Clams and Mussels

Fact Sheet and Hygiene Rating Improver

No. 5



How should I store live oysters, clams, and mussels?

Live (without shells removed) shellfish should never be stored in air-tight containers or bags since the animals can die from lack of oxygen. They can be loosely covered with clean, damp paper towels or cloths to prevent them from drying out in the refrigerator. Store live shellfish above raw meat, or poultry, so juices don't drip on them. Do not store live shellfish directly on ice, since the melting fresh water may kill them. Storing on sea weed is not recommended.

Traceability

All packages of live oysters must be accompanied by a dated health/ID mark on an indelible, water resistant label.

This label shows the identification number of the establishment from which they may have come (in the ellipse), ideally a batch number, date of packaging and declaration that animals must be alive when sold. Alternatively, a minimum durability date could be used.

These details should be sufficient to identify the actual bed from which the oysters were harvested. Keep the health mark details for at least 60 days in case this information is needed. The easiest way to do this is to affix the label into your diary on the day of delivery.

At what temperature should I store live shellfish?

Optimum storage temperature is 4-8°C, temperatures of 1°C or lower (especially freezing temperatures less than 0°C) can kill shellfish. Use an accurate thermometer in your refrigerator.

How long can I keep live shellfish?

Generally, it's best to eat them within one or two days (assuming they are kept refrigerated), but definitely before they die. Check for signs of life before preparing for consumption, and discard any dead shellfish (those with shells that do not close after lightly tapping them). Dead shellfish may contain high numbers of bacteria that could make you ill; don't eat them raw or cooked.

Can I eat raw oysters?

Eating raw oysters can carry a risk of food poisoning because shellfish can contain harmful bacteria and viruses because of the way they feed. Oysters filter large volumes of water to get their food and any bacteria and viruses that may be in the water can build up within the oyster. Infections linked to norovirus (Winter vomiting virus) tend to be more common during the winter. Data appears to show an increase in the number of people, in the UK, with norovirus infections linked to eating raw oysters, especially during the Winter and around February.

FOOD HYGIENE RATING

| STEP | IMPROVE MY RATING | Done |
|------|---|------|
| 1 | There is good traceability for the live shell fish | |
| 2 | The shell fish are stored in the refrigerator in damp conditions, not immersed in water | |
| 3 | I know how to clean the shell fish and I check if they are alive before using | |