



Sign A Pledge To Put A Maryland Oyster Dish On Your Menu

WHY? By putting oysters from the Maryland waters of the Chesapeake Bay on your menu, you are not only enjoying a great, healthy, locally-grown seafood product, but you are actually helping to save the bay! This is not a cliché, it is the truth. We possess the ability to grow billions of oysters. With each adult oyster filtering 30 gallons of water per day, shellfish are a "keystone species" in the revival of the ecology and the economy of the Chesapeake Bay.

The State of Maryland changed the oyster leasing laws four years ago to make our waters more conducive to aquaculture. The new laws provides the opportunity for individuals to "lease" areas of the bay bottom to grow oysters. Oyster aquaculture product in Maryland is rapidly growing! There are currently 13 growers working in Maryland, with 300 oyster farmers that have applied for leases. By supporting these entrepreneurs, you are helping oyster farmers create a positive impact on our rural economies and the health of the Chesapeake Bay.

IF WE HAD ENOUGH OYSTERS IN THE BAY TO FILTER THE WATER REGULARLY, WHAT BENEFIT WOULD THAT HAVE?

- 1.) Oysters filter water, making the water clearer.
- 2.) Sunlight can penetrate to the bottom in 3-4 feet of water causing the submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) to grow
- 3.) SAV provides habitat and cover for juvenile fish and crabs
- 4.) SAV, through photosynthesis, puts oxygen back in the water and consumes carbon dioxide
- 5.) SAV calms the wave action and prevents shoreline erosion
- 6.) Oyster reefs are vibrant living communities that support a wide range of species both above and below the water

The hatchery at Horn Point outside of Cambridge, Maryland is a major partner in the effort to restore the Bay. Governor Martin O' Malley and the Maryland General Assembly have dedicated funding to restoring Harris Creek and have made the planting of hundreds of acres of oyster reefs possible. Last year, DNR, the Oyster Recovery Partnership, NOAA, and UMCES, working together, released over 1.2 BILLION oysters into the Chesapeake. There is good reason to be hopeful about the future of the Bay.

100 years ago, shellfish filtered the entire volume of water in the Bay several times per day. Now, with oysters at less than 1% of their historical population, it happens only every few months. In 1870, the oyster industry employed 30,000 people around the Bay and produced revenue exceeding \$50 million yearly. With your support and commitment to putting Maryland oysters on your menu, we will be one step closer to reaching these levels again.



I pledge to keep at least one Maryland oyster (aquaculture or wild) on the menu at my restaurant at all times. This can be verified at any time by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources via a visit or the submission of a recent invoice showing the purchase of the product. Please sign and fax to (410)260-8279 or email to MDSeafood@dnr.state.md.us

Name (Print): _____

Business : _____

Signature: _____