

Family Shellfish Tips



Tips from an expert

Always check in with the Local Shellfish

Constable. In Massachusetts each town has control over their shellfishing beds, the rules are derived from State legislature but because the town has this control rules will vary from town to town. Here are a few tips to be mindful of to make sure you have a safe and fun time shellfishing.

- **Know where you can and can't dig.**
We live in a place where we are lucky that we have clean enough water where we can dig clams without the worry of bacterial contamination. But always check with the authorities to make sure it's safe to go.
- **Check the tide,** know what it's doing, in most places people like to dig at a low tide.
- **Know what tools/equipment** you can use to harvest shellfish.

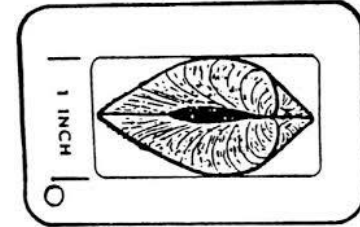
Tips continued...

- **Know the size and amount** of shellfish you can harvest. In Tisbury the limit is $\frac{1}{2}$ bushel of clams/quahogs per week.
- **Any other concerns** about the area jellyfish, HABs etc.
- **Look for posted signs,** some areas may be closed for birds or shellfish management, so keep an eye out.
- **Know your own limits** don't stay out just to fill your basket. If you're tired or not feeling right get out of the water. While enjoyable, shellfishing can also be taxing on someone who has never done it. Be safe.
- **Take only what you need.** Although you can get caught up in the fun it's important to not waste. We should all be good stewards of the pond.



Using a gauge:

A legal size quahog *must* measure an inch thick before being harvested.



Steamer clams must be at least 2 inches long before they reach legal size.



Once harvested:

Shellfish could make you sick if not handled correctly so with proper care. Keep shellfish as cool as possible; DON'T keep them in the sun. When you get home put them in the refrigerator. They can last for about a week in the refrigerator.

Buying a shellfish permit:

Every town in Massachusetts has control over their coastal ponds and harbors in respect to shellfishing, although during colonial times things were done differently today we monitor the water for bacterial contamination, Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) and other natural and manmade events. Each Massachusetts coastal Town has a Shellfish Dept. and they are the ones that care for and grow out the shellfish in various ways for the public harvest. This is municipal aquaculture. By purchasing a shellfish permit you support your Town's aquaculture programs. Check in with your Town to purchase a permit.

Tisbury Town Hall- 508 696 4200

Oak Bluffs Town Hall- 508 693 3554

Edgartown Town Hall- 508 627 6100

Chilmark Town Hall- 508 645 2100

West Tisbury Town Hall- 508 696 0100

Where to buy equipment:

The local tackle shops all have a variety of baskets and rakes. Don't forget a shellfish gauge.

Recipes:

On the Grill:

It's easy get the grill hot put clams on and wait for them to open all the way. Enjoy with melted butter or hot sauce.

Julia Child's Clam Chowder:

Scrub 14 Medium hard shelled clams. Let them disgorge on a rack in large bowl of cold water.

Drop 2/3 cup (4 oz.) diced lean salt pork into 2 quarts of simmering water. Boil slowly 5 minutes. Rinse & drain (to remove salt).

Sauté slowly in heavy 4 quart sauce pan with 1 tablespoon butter for several minutes until pork begins to brown. Stir in 3 cups of sliced onions – cove & cook slowly (8-10 min) until tender and translucent. Blend ¾ cup of crumbled common or pilot crackers. Set aside.

Shuck and chop clams retaining the juices. Or – place clams in a steamer. Add ¼ inch water. Cover and steam several minutes – until open. Remove meat and reserve. Decant liquid and add enough water to make 4 cups – pour into onion pan. Add 3 cups diced (just) boiling potatoes & a bay leaf. Simmer – loosely covered – 20 minutes Chop steamed clam meat by hand (1 ½ cups). Stir into soup. Bring to just below a simmer. Correct seasoning. (Let cure) – cool uncovered – then cover and refrigerate several hours or overnight. Bring to just below simmer, (clams toughen if boiled) add 2-3 cups milk or cream. And bring back to just below simmer before serving.

Quahog Pie:

- 1 quart of freshly shucked quahogs (available in fish markets)
- Pie dough, enough for bottom and top crusts (store-bought is fine)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons of butter, cut into small pieces
- 1 cup of milk
- 1 teaspoon of butter

Drain the quahogs, reserving one cup of the broth to use in the sauce. Using an old-fashioned meat grinder or a modern-day food processor, grind the quahogs. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Line a pie plate with the dough for the bottom crust. Pour the ground quahogs into the pie plate. Dot with small pieces of butter. Cover the quahogs with the dough for the top crust. Bake the pie until the crust begins to turn golden brown, approximately ten minutes. Reduce heat to 350 degrees and bake for another thirty minutes.

Make a white sauce by combining the reserved quahog broth, milk, and one teaspoon of butter in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Simmer until it thickens to desired consistency. Serve the quahog pie with the sauce, mashed potatoes, and a vegetable of your choice.