

Colorado is a landlocked state. Growing up landlocked means you internalize a loose hierarchy when it comes to seafood, one based around someone else's willingness to bring seafood to you and the transportation they're willing to use. The jewels of the sea consumed in landlocked states depend largely on market forces and holidays. "Surf and Turf" meals give lobster an unparalleled power, with a boost in emphasis near Valentine's Day.

Mussels, clams, and scallops have Italian and French history to rely on. Shrimp, as over-processed and ubiquitous as they've become, seem to barely count as seafood in landlocked menus. Some type of heated preparation is expected if not preferred for the above, sushi being a premium indulgence far away from the sea. Oysters are consumed while they're as alive as they get. You don't want to fuck around with oysters in a mountain town, with the ocean at least a thousand miles away.

In this issue, words by Megan and drawings by Jess.



The General was founded in 2009 by Jess Driscoll and Megan Westerby. Each issue is hyper-focused on a single food noun. Find the archive at:
jessdriscoll.com/thegeneral/



My preference runs to a sprinkle of horseradish and a squeeze of lemon, and I've loved discussing my newfound love for oysters with people and learning their opinions and what informed them. The fun of food is the same as in life: experimenting, learning one's tastes, and making new friends.

But in Clearwater, Florida, the oysters are local, delicious, and tied into the community's understanding of food options you serve to guests on a casual Thursday evening. Which is how I found myself with an oyster in one gloved hand and an oyster knife in the other, learning how to shuck like it was a life skill. And perhaps it is, but let's hope I never end up in a place where I have to shuck oysters to stay alive because those bastards can be tricky.

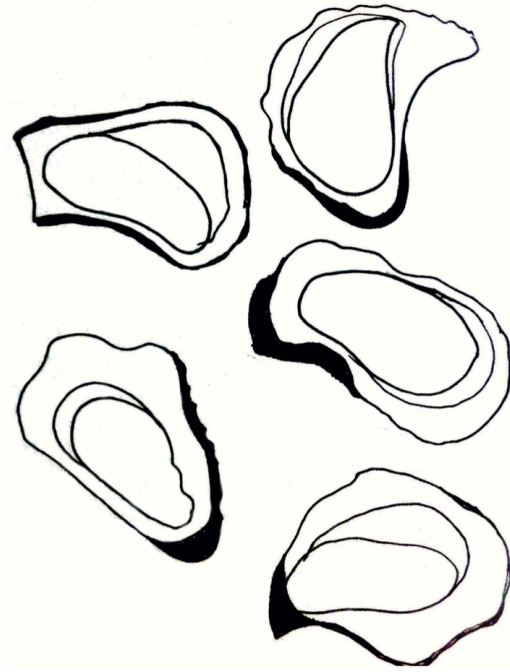
A clean outer shell is important, since properly opened oysters deserve to be slurped straight from the shell. Imperfect oysters or those mangled in the opening make perfect fodder for oyster shooters. Luckily, ours were well cleaned by the time they made it to us, thanks to my hookup's friendship with the fishmonger.

The gist of shucking an oyster is: clean it, find the knuckle, get the tip of your oyster knife into the join, apply enough pressure to get the knife firmly wedged in there, then twist until it pops open.

After, you have but to loosen the oyster from one side of the shell and gently separate the other from its moorings. Take your first fresh oyster without garnish. Inside of magnificently ugly shells, oysters are briny, delicate, and a little disturbing on first glance. You can have an oyster or two dozen in your life and appreciate them, sure, but loving them takes hands-on experience and perhaps downing a few dozen local oysters with friends in one go with a full fleet of condiments standing by.



An easy and quick recipe for Cocktail Sauce: figure out your personal preference for the intersection of ketchup, hot sauce (also up to personal preference; I can't stand Tabasco but love Cholula and Tapatio), horseradish, lemon juice, Worcestershire sauce, brown sugar and/or vinegar, salt, and pepper.



An easy and quick recipe for Oyster Shooters: place an oyster at the bottom of a shot glass. Add a hot sauce of your choice and/or a squeeze of lemon, and fill the rest of the glass with a chilled alcohol of your choice. Tequila and vodka are traditional but I want to experiment with an aromatic gin and a squeeze of lime, a dash of bitters and a pinch of horseradish.

