



THE  
**NICO**  
OYSTER HUNT



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In the early stages of brainstorming for NICO, Nico himself had a wild idea:

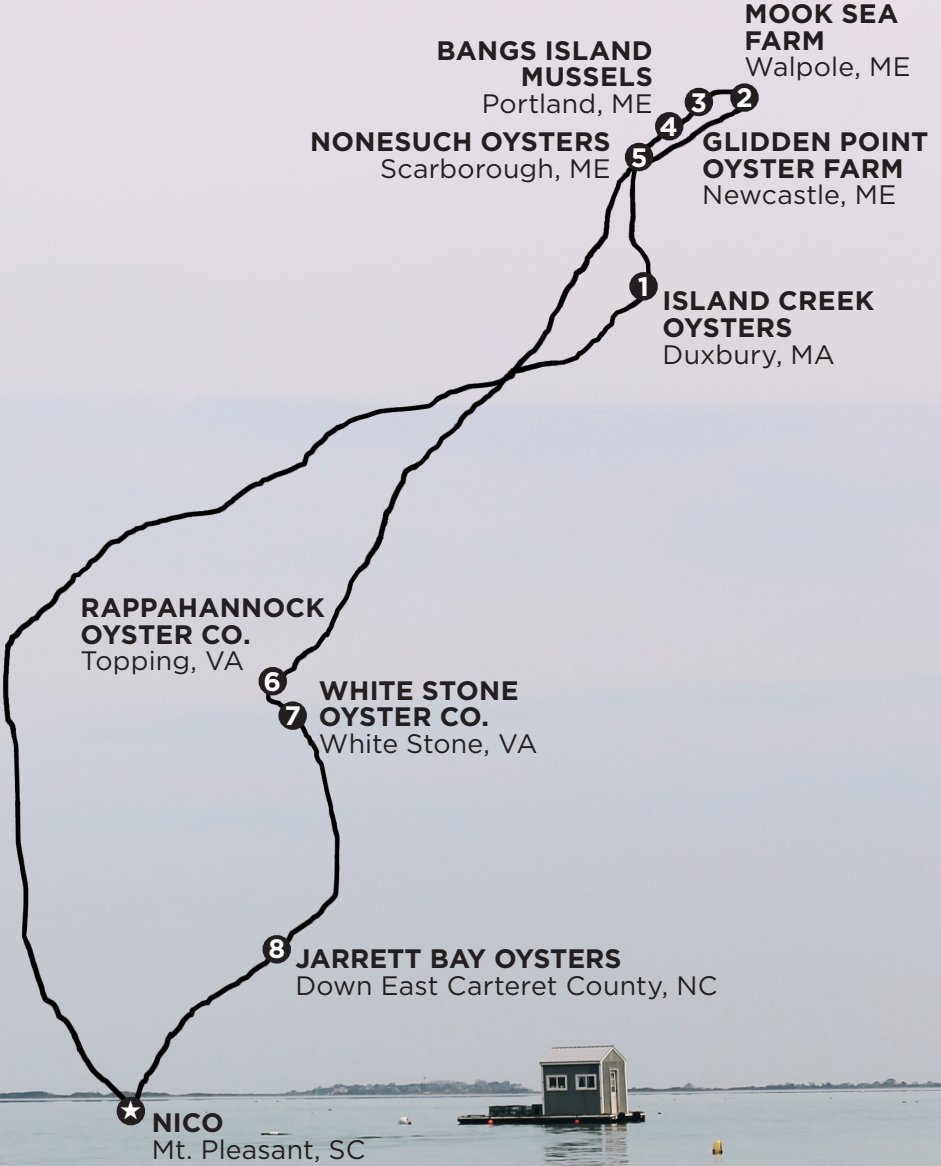
“If we want to be the best oyster bar on Shem Creek, we need to go do some serious oyster research. Let’s jump in a van and climb the coast for a week in search of the best oysters on the East Coast.”

If you know Nico you won’t find this as a surprise, he called his buddy Barton Seaver to plan a trip up the coast, and a few weeks later we found ourselves in Nico’s mini-van heading north on I-95. Here is a look at our trip and how we curated some of the oysters we now serve at NICO.

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# ISLAND CREEK OYSTERS

DAY 1



DUXBURY, MA

Our first stop on the NICO Oyster Hunt started at the highly regarded Island Creek Oysters headquarters in Duxbury, MA. We were met by their wonderful all-female team, who run the hatchery, and were gracious enough to show us, in detail, their entire process of creating the perfect oyster.



What began as a science project between the founder, Skip, and his daughter is now one of three successful hatcheries in the Northeast. Island Creek believes the first step in creating the ideal oyster is to create the perfect algae. This nourishes the baby oyster seed until it is ready for it's final growth in the wild.



The hatchery workers select the “perfect” oysters to breed together to create the ideal oyster seed. Island Creek Oysters are grown on the bay floor to create a rich earthiness and better flavor.

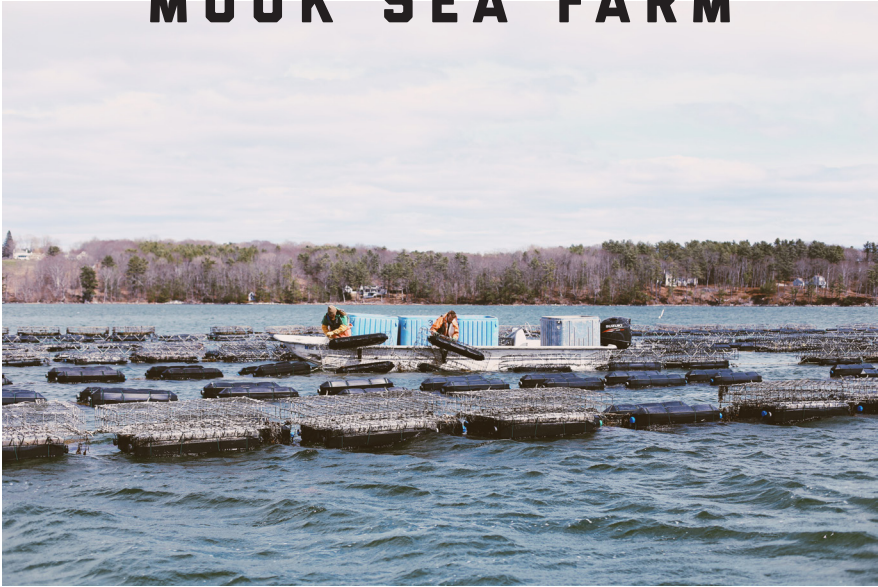


All of Island Creek’s oysters bear a perfect teacup handle on the side, which is intentional and a signature of this renowned hatchery in the Duxbury Bay.



# MOOK SEA FARM

DAY 2



WALPOLE, ME

Our oyster search led us further north to the highly respected Mook Sea Farm. Located along the Damariscotta River, a tidal river that empties into the Atlantic Ocean in Southern Maine, Bill Mook has been growing oysters here since 1985.

The growing season is extremely short, so in order to produce a large crop every year, the oysters are grown in floating cages on the nutrient-rich water's surface. They are able to harvest up to 15,000 oysters per hour with this growing method.

This was the first stop of our journey where we experienced eating fresh oysters right out of the water. Bill Mook took us by boat to his farm where we all ate the most delicious, fresh oysters.







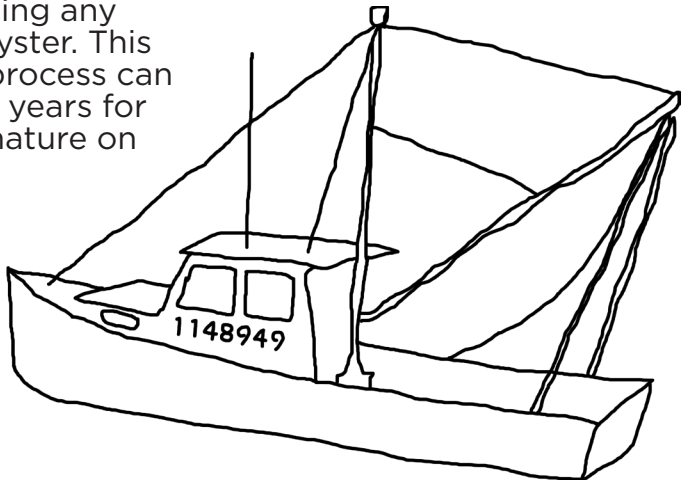
# GLIDDEN POINT OYSTER FARM

NEWCASTLE, ME

DAY 3



As we traveled close-by along the Damariscotta River, our third stop led us to Glidden Point Oyster Farm. Established in 1987, Hannah & Ryan McPherson have a very different philosophy when it comes to growing oysters: slow and steady. Their aim is to grow them as slow as possible, reducing any stress on the oyster. This slow growing process can take up to four years for the oyster to mature on the river floor.







They rely on hand-harvesting techniques to ensure the highest quality of oyster. They either use divers to hand harvest at high tide or personally hand pick mature oysters through the mud, which causes the least amount of harm to the ecosystem. After hand harvesting every oyster, Hannah uses the utmost care to personally pack each oyster bag, ensuring that all oysters are the perfect size for her customers. Glidden Point's focus on curating quality over producing quantity makes this northeast oyster farm very special.



# BANGS ISLAND MUSSELS

PORTLAND, ME

DAY 4



Our next stop led us to the Casco Bay off the coast of Maine where Gary Moretti has been growing sustainable, rope grown mussels on the nutrient rich water surface since 1999.

Mussels in the wild can take up to seven years to fully mature, but Bangs Island discovered a different method of growing mussels at a much quicker rate. Gary and his team grow their seed on the surface of the bay in nutrient rich currents. This allows full maturity to happen in as little as 18 months.





Because the mussels are suspended by rope in the clean waters of the Casco Bay, they are positioned away from sandy tidal zones. This produces the meatiest, sweetest mussel containing little to no grit. Bangs Island Mussels are nationally recognized for their exceptional flavor and unmatched meat-to-shell ratio. It is because of their meticulous techniques, unparalleled hard work, and respect for the ocean that has gained them this recognition.



# NONESUCH OYSTERS

SCARBOROUGH, ME

DAY 5



As we continued our journey through Maine, our next stop was in Scarborough at an award-winning boutique oyster farm called Nonesuch Oysters.



Abigail Carol, a leading woman in aquaculture, believes that “nature works well when you let it.” This philosophy results in growing free range oysters that spend most of their life on the sea floor which causes them to have a thick, beautiful green shell and easy to shuck.

Because of their location in a natural conservancy, their oysters are nationally recognized for their great taste due to their Grade-A clean water.

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# RAPPAHANNOCK OYSTER CO

DAY 6



TOPPING, VA

Making our way down the East Coast, our sixth stop was in Topping, VA.

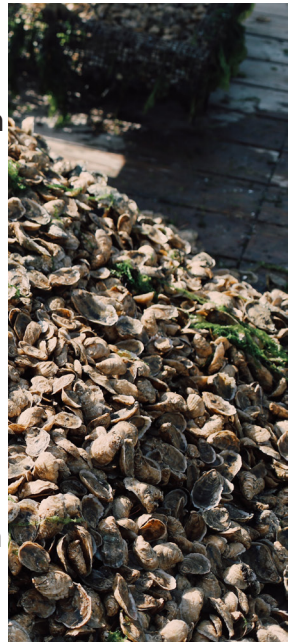
Patrick Oliver and his team at Rappahannock Oyster Co. are leading

East Coast oyster production by farming over 90 acres and producing up to 9 million oysters per year.



The team at Rappahannock put the Chesapeake Bay oyster back on the map about 10 years ago, after the lowest oyster harvest was recorded.

They grow their oysters in cages that sit eight inches above the bottom of the bay which cause them to mature in as little as 18 months.





Rappahannock is situated in an optimal location where the freshwater and salty ocean meet in shallow water, a combination that produces many delicious oyster varieties.

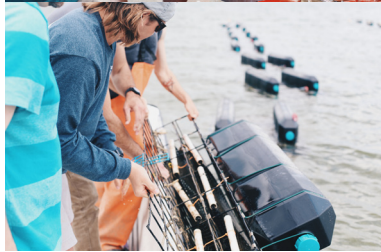
# WHITE STONE OYSTER CO

DAY 7

WHITE STONE, VA



Our next stop led us just north of the Rappahannock River to White Stone Oyster Company. Tom Perry and his dedicated team introduced a new method of aquaculture in Virginia. They are known as the first farm to grow their oysters from start to finish in floating cages on the tumbling surface of the Chesapeake Bay.



Because of the constant movement from the bay, their oysters are extremely healthy with a thick, deep shell and large meat yield.





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White Stone is committed to creating the perfect oyster with an unmatched flavor profile due to their strategically located farm and method.

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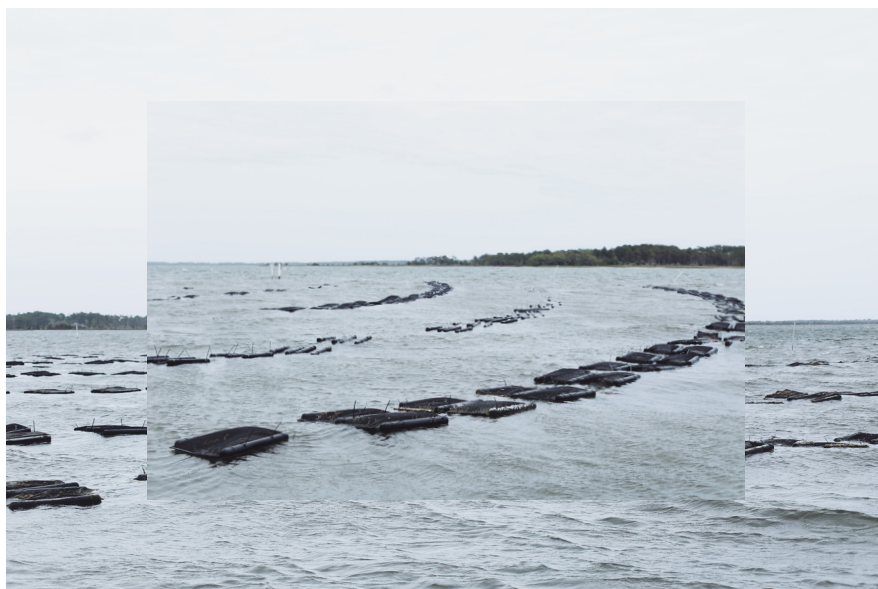
# JARRETT BAY OYSTER CO

DAY 8

DOWN EAST CARTERET COUNTY, NC

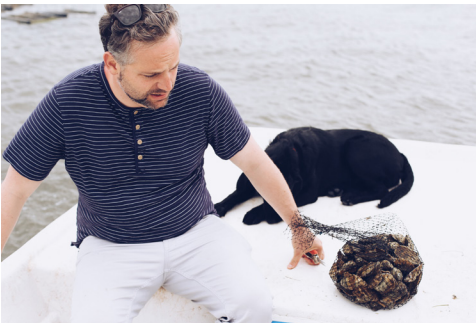
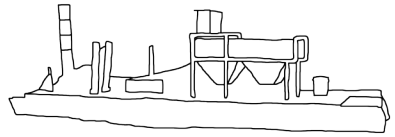


Our last stop of the NICO Oyster Hunt landed us in Jarrett Bay where we visited a farm that was established in 2014. Kolby Martin is currently producing 300,000 oysters per year by himself. He hopes to double that number in 2018.

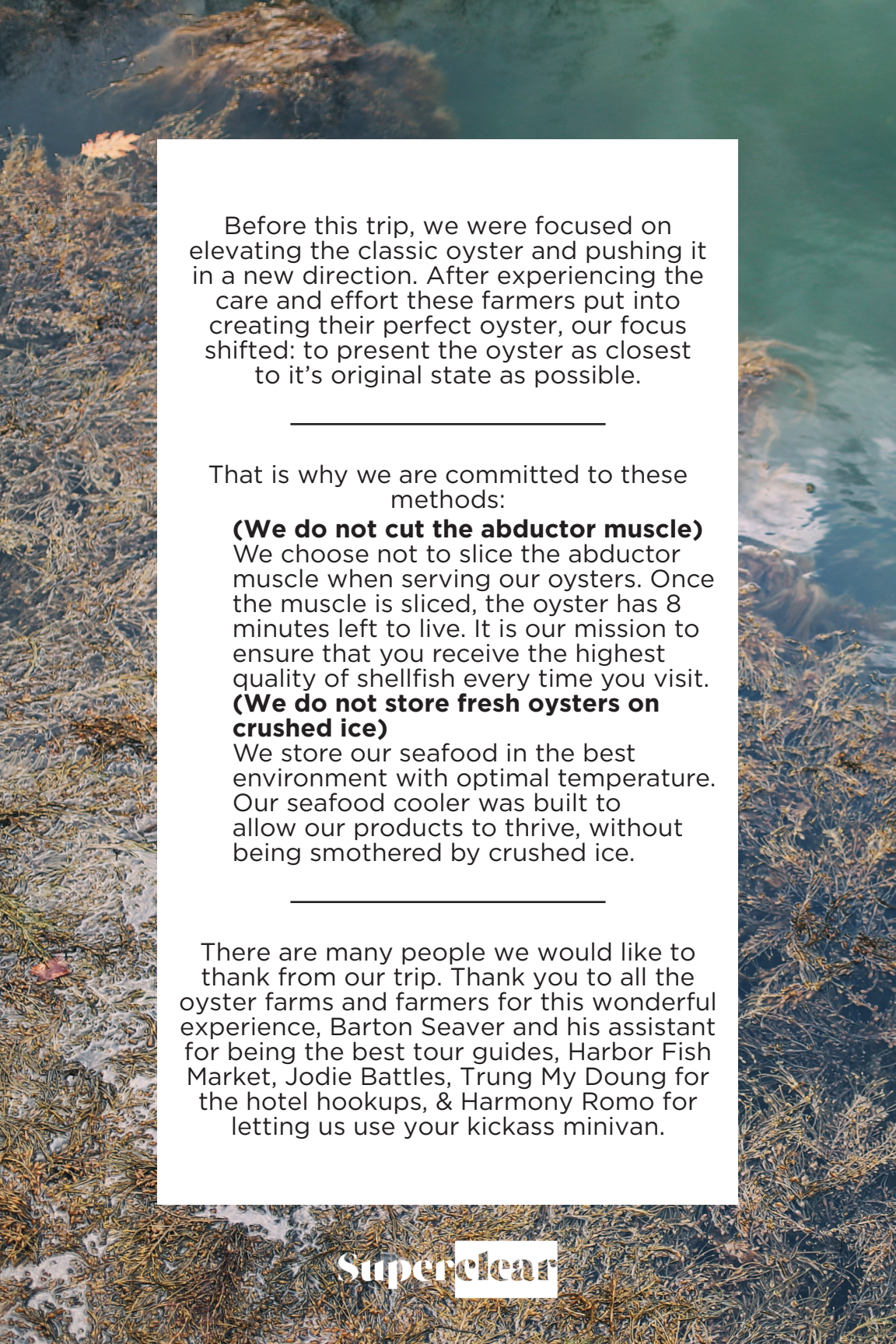


Like some of the other farms we visited, he also believes that the best way to grow oysters is by placing them in bags that float on the water surface.









Before this trip, we were focused on elevating the classic oyster and pushing it in a new direction. After experiencing the care and effort these farmers put into creating their perfect oyster, our focus shifted: to present the oyster as closest to it's original state as possible.

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That is why we are committed to these methods:

**(We do not cut the abductor muscle)**

We choose not to slice the abductor muscle when serving our oysters. Once the muscle is sliced, the oyster has 8 minutes left to live. It is our mission to ensure that you receive the highest quality of shellfish every time you visit.

**(We do not store fresh oysters on crushed ice)**

We store our seafood in the best environment with optimal temperature. Our seafood cooler was built to allow our products to thrive, without being smothered by crushed ice.

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There are many people we would like to thank from our trip. Thank you to all the oyster farms and farmers for this wonderful experience, Barton Seaver and his assistant for being the best tour guides, Harbor Fish Market, Jodie Battles, Trung My Doung for the hotel hookups, & Harmony Romo for letting us use your kickass minivan.