



Emmett Watson's Oyster Bar

SEATTLE'S FIRST OYSTER BAR | ESTABLISHED 1979
BEER, WINE & FOOD FOR THOUGHT

DRAFT BEER

- Mac & Jack's African Amber \$7.25
- Maritime Pacific Old Seattle Lager \$7.25
- Holy Mountain Wit \$8.25
- Maritime Pacific Seasonal IPA \$7.25
- Bale Breaker Bottom Cutter Imperial IPA \$7.50
- Seasonal Rotating Cider \$12
- Yonder Dry Cider \$12

BOTTLES & CANS

- Rainier \$5.25
- Coors Light \$5.25
- Bale Breaker Field 41 Pale Ale \$6.75
- Best Day Brewing Mexican Lager N/A \$7
- Best Day Brewing Hazy IPA N/A \$7

RED WINE

- Mirassou Pinot Noir (CA) \$9.25 | \$35

WHITE WINE

- Lago Vinho Rose (PORT) \$10.95 | \$39
- Poet's Leap Riesling (WA) \$12.95 | \$48
- Wairau River Sauv Blanc (NZ) \$12.50 | \$46
- Lorelle Pinot Grigio (WA) \$10.95 | \$39
- Les Petites Sardines Muscadet (FR) \$9.50 | \$33

Poggio Costa Prosecco (IT) \$10.95 | \$39

MAKE IT A MIMOSA
\$11 Orange OR Grapefruit

*Emmett
&
Tiger*



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Aw shucks, this bivalve fan never met an oyster he didn't like

It is given to some men to know a love so profound, so pure, so all-encompassing, that their spirits can soar to the heavens and their passions flame at the very sight of their consuming desires. I have been given such a love.

I refer, of course, to my ardor for the family Ostreidae. This seductive love object can be found, as a general rule, between tidal levels or in shallow waters along the coasts of all continents.

These bivalves in Europe are known as O. edulis; on the Eastern and Gulf coasts of the U.S. as O. virginica; on the California coast, O. conchophila, and here, in our beloved Northwest, as O. lurida.

You must know by now that we are talking about oysters. Right? You are: the heat of August is a lousy time to arouse one's passion for oysters. This exquisite mollusk is but a soft, flabby caricature of its real self in November — cold, firm, succulent, inviting.

But a love for oysters knows no season; those of us with this passion can't help ourselves.



EMMETT WATSON
Times columnist

You will excuse a personal lapse. I fell in love with my first unsalted, unaccompanied raw oyster at the age of 13. In a misguided Depression-era venture, my dad got control of some oyster beds in Willapa Harbor.

He came home with a sack of these things one day, cracked one open and called me to the kitchen. "Eat this," he said, proffering the half shell. It looked awful — large, grayish

and slimy; utterly repellent. But I slurped it down — and, wow! It was delicious. "Gimme another," I said.

Then came another and another. It was love at first slurp. It may have been the only time in my young life when my father was really proud of me.

My love affair with the oyster matured and flourished. It reached its apex of gustatory orgasm at Von's, the great old all-hours eatery just off Fourth Avenue and Pike Street. Here the night people gathered — show biz people, legitimate actors, the sports crowd and midnight-prowling insomniacs.

Von's had, probably, the largest menu in the world. Chief among its items was an Olympia oyster cocktail, for \$1.25. This was in the '30s and the late Mike Donohoe and I used to gulp these tiny delicacies down by the shovelful.

But the Olympia perished, the victim of pollution and neglect. Only lately has it made a comeback. But the Olympia cocktail we ate then would cost, probably, \$20, or even more, today.

I claim at least some credit for pushing the oyster to its present eminence in the Seattle of 1990. A friend of mine, Sam Bryant, and I started a trend that eventually resulted in a local oyster craze.

We opened the city's first oyster bar Feb. 18, 1979. For two years we had a monopoly. We were written up in travel magazines and by visiting food authors from dozens of cities. People came from all over the world — principally from England and Australia — to eat our raw oysters by the dozen.

Competition came two years later. First there was Shuckler's. Then F. X. McRory's Steak and Chophouse. Today more than a dozen restaurants feature these lovely bivalves on their menus.

What kinds of oysters? Well, in Puget Sound we have the Minterbrook and the Shoalwater from the south Sound. There is the Hamma Hamma from Hood Canal and, lately, the Snow Creek. This latter breed is said to be firm in hot weather because some humans don't allow them to spawn.

There is no "best" oyster on Puget Sound. It is a matter of taste, of mood, degree of hunger. But to pick a personal best I would choose the Canterbury oyster from the benign waters of Quilcene Bay.

Years ago, I used to fly a float plane to the Canterbury oyster headquarters and pick up jars of these delicious mollusks. The elder, late Ray Canterbury and I became friends. So when Sam Bryant and I opened our oyster bar, his son Ray agreed to let us have an allotment from his relatively small farm.

(To allay any misgivings about conflict of interest, I sold out my share of the oyster bar to Sam Bryant three years ago. He has not changed the name of the place because he can't afford to put up new signs.)

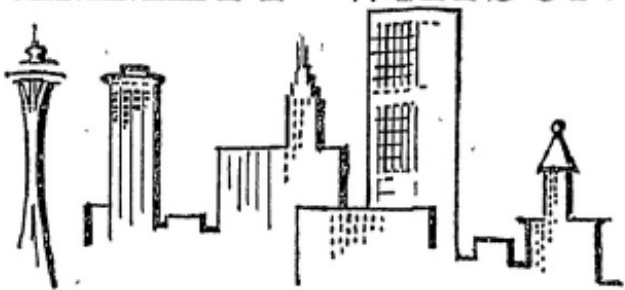
Back to the Canterburs: So far as I know, Ray sells only to Shuckler's, the Other Place, Trader Vic's and Canlis. Because of my long ago friendship with Ray's father, Sam gets a regular supply of the Quilcene-Canterbury. The oysters in Seattle, circa

1990, are not cheap. The average price for a half-dozen on the half-shell is \$5.95. To a real oyster lover, this is like sampling peanuts — a half-dozen is just a start. So it is that people run up tabs of \$60 to \$70 inhaling raw oysters. These are the true nuts, the passionate believers, the real bivalve junkies among us.



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EMMETT WATSON



All About Whatever It Is

IN THE COURSE of a rather shapeless life spent mostly in the Northwest, I have managed to survive by not thinking much about the geoduck. It

is not hard not to think about a geoduck. It amazes me how easy it is, really. The last time I thought about a geoduck was many years ago, when the then city editor of Brand X, Mr. Henry MacLeod, explained, first, what a geoduck was, how you hunted or captured it, and the way you made chowder from it.



As Mr. MacLeod (he's now a managing editor, or Heloise in disguise) spoke in detail about the geoduck, I found my mind wandering. Thus began my long career of not thinking about geoducks.

IT WAS not Henry's fault. He was quite eloquent on the subject. But I was thinking about a pay raise, or something. Maybe it was a memo I'd received, for having used the word "vicious" when I really meant "savage" in describing a sports event. A scolding memo from another editor of that period. "Look up the precise meaning," said the memo. Shortly thereafter, I mistook the address on my way to work and wound up at the P-I, where, it developed, my contract did not call for thinking about geoducks.

(Where is this getting us?)



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