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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Mussels--not the manly, but the marine variety--"one of the best and most abundant of sea foods, furnishes an example of waste of natural resources in America through failure to utilize it."

The quotation, furnished by the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior, characterized the situation with regard to this first cousin of the clam and oyster--a quarter of a century ago!

Somewhat reluctantly, the Service admits the situation has changed but little; only about \$20,000 worth of mussel meats were produced for the whole United States last year, for instance, and almost alone the New York market both produced and swallowed up the total. The facts remain then, that mussels are a "best" and an "abundant" sea food, yet are here almost wholly neglected: for contrast, in a single year, England, Holland, and France among them produced and delighted epicures with half a billion pounds of these juicy shellfish.

As one of nature's most easily digestible foods--equal or superior in flavor to either clams or oysters--sea mussels are cheap, easily taken, accessible to the markets. The quantity of actual nutriment contained in the edible portions is slightly greater than in oysters and clams, and the mussel therefore contains at least as much food, pound for pound, as is found in related shellfish in common use.

From consumer standpoint, sea mussels have the advantage of being in season when oysters are out and, in the New England and Middle Atlantic states, are in prime condition from December to July. The human body can use practically all of the nutriment contained in the meats and liquor of mussels, and persons of weak digestion have found that they can eat them with impunity when other meatfoods cause distress. Being palatable, nutritious, digestible, wholesome, and cheap, mussels are food for rich and poor, the well and the sick.

For use in the fresh state, mussels will be purchased in the shell, which are blue-black. Be sure that the shells are tightly closed. Consumers should be careful to wash them well before cooking. They are opened with a knife like clams or steamed open. The only inedible part, except the shell, is the little tuft of black hairs known as the byssus, or beard, which is readily detached after cooking.

Canned mussels of good quality, preserved either in their own juice or pickled in vinegar and spices, are now prepared by a few firms on both Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Thus prepared they retain their tenderness and most of their natural flavor.

Mussels may be cooked in the same ways as oysters and clams, and in other ways distinctly their own. The accompanying recipes are recommended:

Fried mussels a la Colbert

Wash and clean as usual. Steam until shell opens. Remove the meats from the shells, and take out the beard; then roll in flour, dip in two eggs beaten with 1/2 cup of milk, and roll in bread crumbs. Fry in hot fat or oil. Drain and dry well on a napkin. Serve hot with a Colbert sauce made as follows: Boil down a gill of brown sauce and meat extract the size of a nut; while whipping the sauce put in 2 ounces of butter, the juice of a lemon, and some chopped parsley.

Mussel Chowder, New England Style

Clean and cook the mussels as usual. Remove the meat; take out the beard, preserving the broth or liquor in another dish. To a half peck of mussels take 3 ounces of salt pork, cut in small dice, and fry in a kettle; add two onions,

sliced, and cook well, but do not let brown; add a teaspoonful of flour; stir well. Then add the liquor with the same amount of water. Let it come to a boil, and add three potatoes sliced thin. Boil slowly until they are done, then add the mussels and a pint of boiling milk. Season well, and serve with pilot or soft crackers.

Mussels on the half shell a la Mariniere

Clean and steam the mussels as usual, adding one-half cup of water and one-half cup of white wine to one-half peck of mussels. Strain the liquor and make a Mariniere sauce as follows: Chop a large onion very fine, fry in 2 ounces of butter, but do not let it get brown; add 1 ounce of flour, stir well, and add the liquor; boil 30 minutes; season to taste; add some chopped parsley; and pour over the mussels, which have been previously placed on a hot platter on the half shell.

Pickled mussels

Clean and steam in the usual way. Take out the meats and place in a bowl with one carrot and two onions sliced very thin, 10 grains of whole white pepper, three cloves, one-fourth ounce of salt, 10 grains of all-spices, one small red pepper if any handy, one-half pint of good vinegar, one-half pint of mussel liquor, and two tablespoonfuls of olive oil, one clove of garlic. They are ready to eat after a few hours.

Sea mussels a la Newburg

After thoroughly cleaning one-half peck of mussels, steam them as usual. Remove the meats from the shells and place them in a saucepan, adding a glass or cupfull of their liquor and a pint of heavy cream and a glass of good sherry wine. Season to taste with salt, nutmeg, and cayenne pepper; place on the fire and bring to a boil. Then have ready in a dish 3 ounces of butter and the yolks of two eggs mixed together in a paste. Pour in the saucepan, stirring the mixture on the range all the time till it comes to the boiling point, but do not let it boil. Serve in chafing dish with toasted bread around.

Mussel Broth

Steam 3 pounds of mussels in one cup water in which there is a small amount of onion, celery and parsley. Season the liquid with salt, pepper and butter. Serve hot.

Mussel Bisque

Add an equal amount of milk to mussel broth. Thicken this, using 1/2 tbsp. of flour to each cup of liquid, boil up. Serve this with or without the addition of chopped mussels.

Mussels and Rice Provincial

Saute the mussels in oil until browned, then pour highly seasoned tomato sauce over them. Serve this on boiled rice. Sprinkle with minced parsley.