

NEW JERSEY SEA GRANT EXTENSION SERVICE

MARINE CUISINE

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How to shuck a hard clam with ease....

INTRODUCTION

The key to opening a hard clam, *Mercenaria mercenaria*, easily is to chill it thoroughly in order to shock it into muscle relaxation. This can be done by putting the clams in the freezer for about forty-five minutes, immersing them in a mixture of ice, salt, and water for about one hour, or by storing them in crushed ice indefinitely. For cleaner preparation and serving, clams should be washed or scrubbed. There are four market sizes of clams: chowders are the largest, followed by cherrystones, top necks, and little necks. To open clams, a sturdy-bladed knife, not overly sharp nor more than four inches in length, is necessary.

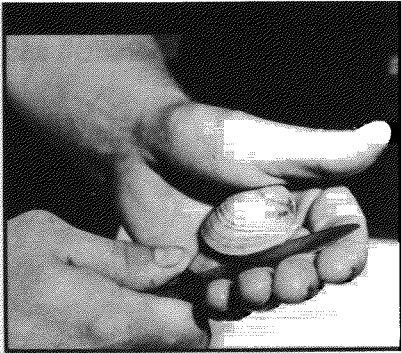
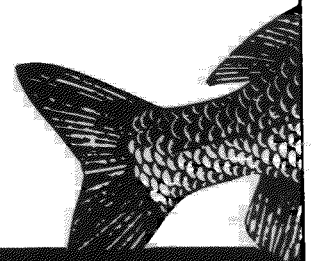
1

Grasp clam firmly in hollow of hand, with the indentation of the shell in the direction of the thumb. Place the knife blade between the halves of the shell. Hold the back of the knife blade firmly in the middle of the fingers. Squeeze the hand and the knife will enter.

2

With the blade in place, sever one of the adductor muscles, then twist the handle until the shell pops.

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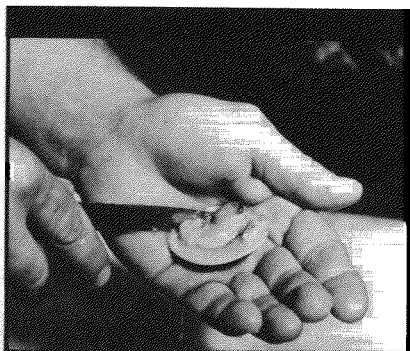
3

Move the blade around the inside of the top shell and sever the other muscle. The top shell can then be easily removed.

4

Run the blade under the clam meat to separate it from the bottom shell.

NOTE: The clam can be dipped in cocktail sauce or "slurped" right out of the shell. Appropriate condiments can be used according to individual tastes — lemon juice, a drop of Tabasco, or horseradish and catsup.



ATLANTIC CITY STEAMED CLAMS

Place 100 Top Necks in a very large pot.

Add 8 oz. water

Over the top of the clams generously sprinkle fresh parsley, crushed red pepper, and some salt. Then pour olive oil over all to soak the top layer well. Steam until open. Try the broth, too!

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