

Wild Side

OYSTERS

By LYNETTE RAE
McADAMS
FOR COAST WEEKEND



LYNETTE RAE McADAMS PHOTO

Oyster shells

Nestled in the shallow waters of every sea across the globe, bathed in the brine of the revolving tides, oysters have been filtering and feasting from Earth's oceans for at least 250 million years.

Belonging to a unique family of bivalves — Ostreidae — this curious group of mollusks, comprising about 16 different species, all employ fine hairs, called cilia, to draw water across their gills, trapping sediment, plankton and particles of algae in a kind of aqueous, round-the-clock buffet that benefits the entire ecosystem.

Individually, one oyster can cleanse 30 to 50 gallons of water per day, but clustered together, in their natural reefs and “beds,” the oysters' abilities increase exponentially, with one acre of habitat capable of filtering up to 24 million gallons in the same amount of time.

As much as they contribute to the health of our oceans and brackish waterways, oysters are far better

known for their culinary assets, about which there is little ambivalence. Considered definitively succulent or, to the contrary, simply slimy, people seem to love them or loathe them in equal measure. For those who find them favorable, there is no end to the choices of preparation — from different cooking methods to varieties of seasonings — but real purists understand: The best way to eat an oyster is raw and alive, with a splash of fine vinegar and a chaser of chilled champagne.

Much like wine and coffee, oysters develop a specific flavor profile based on the adjacent lands and waters in which they're grown, and all five of the edible oyster species cultivated in the U.S. taste uniquely different.

Locally, the gleaming waters of Washington's Willapa Bay, still the most productive oystering estuary on the continent, yields mostly Pacific oysters, which replaced the native Olympia oyster after

decades of exploitation during the last half of the 19th century. Lightly salty, with a delicate finish of clean cucumber, they are considered among the best the world has to offer.

Loaded with calcium, iron and protein, oysters offer many health benefits, but, sadly, none that measure up to lore. Though lovers through the ages have touted the bivalve as a potent aphrodisiac, with no less a personality than Casanova himself purportedly indulging in 50 or more each morning at breakfast, most scientific testing doesn't support the hype.

That said, recent studies have shown that zinc, found in high concentrations throughout the oyster's flesh, is one of the first minerals utilized by the human body in the production of testosterone, so there is a chance — though a slim one, for sure — that this famous delicacy, so perfect an accompaniment to the holiday bubbly, might also add a little vigor to your midnight New Year's kiss. **CW**

word nerd

By RYAN HUME
FOR COAST WEEKEND

GHADAR
[Gh•DEER]

(In Punjabi: ਗ਼ਦਰ ਪਾਰਟੀ)

Proper noun

Ghadar Party: An early twentieth-century movement of Punjabi East Asian immigrants, who — facing plague, famine and British imperialism — shot out by the millions from the Raj (what the Indian subcontinent was referred to under British rule) to different parts of the world to find work and decent living conditions.

In North America, these immigrants first established themselves on the East Coast of the U.S. as merchants, public servants, military and laborers before moving west. Many Punjabi, whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, established themselves along the Columbia River, from The Dalles to Astoria.

In May 1913, many Punjabi from as far away as British Columbia and California assembled at the Finnish Socialist Hall in Astoria to hear a speaker, Har Dyal, a Stanford professor. Dyal's speech would come to be known as the founding moment of the Ghadar Party, a revolutionary



DON ANDERSON PHOTO

In 2013, Pishora Singh Dillon (center) and then-Mayor Willis Van Dusen, along with about a hundred onlookers, celebrate the unveiling of the Ghadar Centennial Plaque at Maritime Memorial Park in Astoria. The plaque was discovered missing earlier this year, and local politicians and business owners have donated money to replace the historical marker.

nationalist movement aiming to take back control of India from British colonialists at any cost.

While the original Ghadar Mutiny of 1915 was unsuccessful, leading to many arrests and executions under British rule, the larger effort of the Ghadar Party is seen as a precursor to the later non-violent Indian independence movement led by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

Origin

Sometimes spelled as gadar or ghadr, ghadar is an Urdu word by way of Arabic, meaning “revolt” or “rebellion.” One of the founders of the party, Kartar Singh Sarabha, wrote in the first issue of the weekly paper *The Ghadar*, which would become the publication the party rallied around: “Today there begins ‘Ghadar’ in foreign lands, but in our country's tongue, a war against the British Raj. What is our name? Ghadar. What is our work? Ghadar. Where will be the Revolution? In India. The time will soon come when rifles and blood will take the place of pens and ink.”

“About a year ago a good many of the Hindu employ-ees at Astoria and vicinity

left here for California where it was said they were endeavoring to go back to India. It seems they were unable to get transportation as they were all bent on Anarchy against the British Government in India and were afraid to trust themselves on British vessels. Within the last few days quite a number of them have returned to Astoria including their leader Munshi Ram whom I saw yesterday for the first time for a long time.”

—E. E. Cherry, “British Foreign Office Record,” Astoria, Oregon, Dec. 11, 1915

“The weighty bronze metal sign attached to a metal pole at Maritime Memorial Park, which recognizes the Ghadar Party, went missing in October and has yet to be found. State Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, former Astoria Mayor Willis Van Dusen, Lovekesh Kumar — owner of Super Mart in Warrenton — and Bahadur Singh — Kumar's brother — have donated \$1,670 to cover the cost of its replacement.”

—“Donors pitch in to replace missing Ghadar Party sign at Maritime Memorial Park,” *The Daily Astorian*, Dec. 13, 2017 **CW**

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