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Oysters on ice at Eventide Oyster Co

# The Foodist's 10 Favorite Oyster Bars Across America

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PRINT Oysters are having a moment, and no wonder. They're delicious, unpretentious, and, with their seemingly

magical ability to filter the waters they grow in, sustainable, too. When I see oysters on a menu, I have a hard time not ordering them. There's just nothing like sitting at the bar with a frosty beer or a glass of Muscadet and slurping down a dozen. Luckily, there's no shortage of great oyster bars to do just that. Here are 10 of my favorites from across the country.

# **Eventide Oyster Co.**, Portland, ME

The extensive selection at this bright, spare restaurant in the Old Port is broken down into oysters "From Maine" and "From Away," all displayed atop the bar in a massive trough of Maine granite. The raw bar menu is the way to go, but if you're not all oystered out after a dozen, be sure to give the roasted jumbo Winter Points a try.

#### The Walrus & The Carpenter, Seattle, WA

From the very first time you pull a stool up to the bar for a dozen of the freshest oysters on the West Coast, you'll already feel like a regular (that's why I named this one the Best New Restaurants in 2012, and why it remains one of my 20 most important). Go for some Hama Hamas, "Samish Sweets," or any of the other offerings that are pulled from the Puget Sound less than an hour's drive away.



# Grand Central Oyster Bar, New York, NY

For all the oysters I've slurped from this classic restaurant in Grand Central Terminal, I've never once sat at a table. Take a seat at one of the iconic U-shaped counters, and bask in the class and tradition of this New York landmark, and in the sheer number of bivalves shucked and served here over the past 101 years.

#### Casamento's, New Orleans, LA

As a rule, I only ever eat oysters served on ice. But I'll make an exception here, an old-school, no-questions-asked family joint that's been serving super-fresh Louisiana oysters for 90 years. Just \$12 gets you a dozen, and don't miss out on their oysters other ways, too—charbroiled, stewed, and in the legendary oyster loaf, fried and packed between freshly baked and buttered pan bread.

# The Ordinary, Charleston, SC

Hang out with pearled ladies and khaki-wearing men under the soaring ceilings of this former bank building and slurp down some local Caper's Blades. Get there early

for a seat at the bar, where you can see the shuckers in action and peer through the old vault to the kitchen; if you're lucky, you'll catch Clammer Dave himself making his delivery.



#### **B&G Oysters**, Boston, MA

At **Barbara Lynch**'s tiny neighborhood oyster bar, there are always at least 12 different varieties of the freshest oysters on offer, delivered throughout the day. You're given a checklist and a golf pencil to mark off the ones you want to try. I love this place at three in the afternoon, after the lunch rush and before it picks up again for dinner; there's no better way to kill an afternoon than chatting with the shucker as he serves them up to you fresh.

#### Swan Oyster Depot, San Francisco, CA

Dare I say, **my favorite restaurant in America?** There's always a line at the 18-seat seafood shop, but it's more than worth it for the cracked Dungeness crab and the simple, sashimi-style scallops served with just a little olive oil, salt, and pepper. And of course, no meal here is complete without a dozen Drakes Bay oysters.

#### Hog Island Oyster Farm, Marshall, CA

There's a Hog Oyster Bar in San Francisco, but it's 49 miles north of the city at the Hog Island oyster farm itself that the best bivalve eating is to be found. The farm is open during the day so you can reserve a picnic table, unload the cooler of beer or wine you brought, and shuck your own oysters overlooking Tomales Bay. The good Hog Island folks will even give first-timers a lesson.

# GT Fish & Oyster, Chicago, IL

I always end up here when I'm in Chicago, even when I don't plan on it. The best seat in the house is at the bar, directly in front of the glass case teeming with oysters on ice, watching the shuckers at work. Follow up a dozen on the half-shell with the fish tacos, served with chipotle aioli and chicharrón.

#### Prime Meats, Brooklyn, NY

This Carroll Gardens restaurant makes the list as my local haunt; I've probably slurped down more oysters here than at any other place. Find me at the bar with a dozen oysters and a cold pint of Einbecker. (They even have a Mug Club for frequent drinkers—I'm #23.) Look up at the chalkboard to see the day's offerings—always perfectly presented, perfectly shucked, and ice cold.

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