

MUSSELS
FOR
Many

CIRCULATING COPY
Sea Grant Depository



Mussels for Many

A Handbook for

Food Service Managers

Roy S. Alonzo

Report # UNH-SG-AB-103

This publication is a result of research sponsored by
NOAA Office of Sea Grant, Department of Commerce,
under Grant No. 04-6-158-44056.

The U. S. Government is authorized to produce and distribute
reprints for governmental purposes notwithstanding any copyright
notation that may appear hereon.

Thompson School of Applied Science
University of New Hampshire

June 1977

In an era when food costs are rising, shortages are looming and labor costs are climbing, the food service manager must learn to adjust menus with the skill of a concert master tuning a violin.

New products must be selected to replace old ones that encounter price resistance from customers. Products with declining supplies have uncertain futures and may best be eliminated from menus, in favor of plentiful, new and exciting products.

One such product is the mussel which abounds on our shores and, until recently, has gone virtually unnoticed in the United States.

Mussels have graced tables in other parts of the world for centuries, adding zest and flair to menus and conjuring such gastronomic memories as to bring customers back again and again. People like mussels. In numerous taste tests and supermarket demonstrations, an overwhelming majority of tasters have responded favorably to mussels cooked in different ways.

There are many reasons for adding mussels to your menu, starting with the bottom line of your P & L statement. They are a profitable, low-cost alternative to many other high protein items.

These seafood delicacies from our own New England waters can add variety to monotonous menus and lend themselves to attractive culinary presentations.

Mussels are associated with fine continental dining and lend that image to the establishment which has mussels on its menu. The well-traveled patron quickly identifies them as an epicure's delight. Most seafood lovers need only try them once to recognize their pleasing characteristics.

Mussels can be used in many ways on the commercial menu. They are a high protein, low calorie food that can be prepared as appetizers, entrees or salads. They can be served alone or as part of a main dish, as a gourmet specialty or as a fast-food item. A la carte or on the full dinner plate, they can be served hot or cold and prepared from a fresh, frozen or canned state. These flexibilities allow maximum ease to the food service manager in achieving a balance of price, appearance, temperature, taste and nutritional composition in menus.

Mussels can also affect your labor cost. Items can be prepared in advance and refrigerated or frozen until time of use, thus making better use of workers during slack periods and reducing strain during busy periods. The end result is a contribution toward greater productivity per-man-hour, less fatigue and smoother scheduling of personnel--all of which are important components of an improved labor-cost percentage.

Published by the University of New Hampshire Marine Advisory Program, a part of the UNH/UMO Cooperative Institutional Sea Grant Program, July, 1977. Multiple copies (10 or more) of this booklet are available for \$.50 from the UNH Marine Advisory Program, 222 Kingsbury Hall, Durham, N.H. 03824 (603-862-1889).

Following are some specific details on mussels, as related to the operations of a food service establishment.

Purchasing

Mussels are readily harvested in the coastal waters of the northern United States. Your seafood dealer can arrange for regular distribution of supplies to your establishment. Information on sources (names and addresses) may be obtained from the Maine Department of Marine Resources and the University of New Hampshire Marine Advisory Program.

The usual market form for fresh mussels is the bushel sack. A bushel of mussels weighs about 60 pounds and yields about 15 pounds of picked meats.

The number of mussels in a bushel will vary according to their average size. Price will vary according to market and supply conditions. However, mussels have been and continue to be about the least expensive seafood available. A bushel may yield from 1200 to 1600 mussels. At the very least, 100 portions of 12 mussels each can be served to customers from one bushel. If the wholesale cost of the bushel of mussels were \$8.00, the cost of each portion would be eight cents. How many protein items can a food establishment produce today with a raw food cost of eight cents? Mussels can be very profitable.

The best time to buy fresh mussels is from October through April. Frozen and canned products will become available throughout the year as demand increases. Fresh mussels can be purchased in the shell or in gallon cans, already shucked and packed.

Receiving

Fresh mussels should be kept under constant refrigeration while in transit and upon inspection and receipt, they should immediately be put into refrigerated storage.

Be certain to buy mussels, and all of your shellfish products, from certified, reputable dealers to assure high quality.

Storing

Like all seafoods, fresh mussels should be consumed as soon as possible after receipt. The fresher they are, the better.

Refrigerate mussels, for short-term storage only, at temperatures of 32°F to 35°F. To prevent air-drying, it is suggested they be covered with a moist cloth topped with ice.

A plastic barrel, with a small improvised rack placed in its bottom to raise the mussels above the drainage liquid which will accumulate, makes an excellent holder for a sack of mussels. Do not use a barrel cover: mussels are alive and need to breathe.

Plumper mussels can be produced by soaking the meats in cold water, to which a few tablespoons of flour have been added. The soaking should occur under refrigeration.

Preparation

It is important to prepare mussels properly, to achieve maximum customer satisfaction.

Mussels should be cleaned well before cooking. There are many quality-conscious dealers, who constantly strive to produce clean mussels and who do, in fact, deliver a surprisingly clean product right now. Insist on clean mussels.

Any small utility brush will facilitate thorough cleaning. Scrubbing shells under cold, running water and pulling off the byssus threads--"bearding" the mussels--is all that is required. The byssus threads are used by the mussel to attach and cling to surfaces. Barnacle-like attachments to the shells are of no concern in the cleaning process; however, removal of sediment and any foreign matter is essential.

Sort mussels carefully to be sure that only live and fresh ones are used. A smart tap, with a knife handle, on the shell of a partially opened mussel should make it close if it is alive. Any mussels that remain open before cooking or closed after cooking should be discarded. As with all shellfish, when in doubt, throw it out.

Cooking

Avoid overcooking mussels--5 or 6 minutes should be enough. For best results, cook to order in a lidded pot, shaking several times during the process to allow all mussels to open. Serve them while they are piping hot. A variety of recipes are given in the next section to illustrate some of the many uses of mussels. They also can be substituted for clams in many recipes and cooked in any style or manner in which clams can be cooked.

MUSSEL RECIPES

Mussels Steamed in Wine

(cook to order)

12 mussels, cleaned ½ onion, chopped (or 1 clove garlic)
2 tbsp. butter (or margarine) 4 oz. white wine

Saute onion in butter, add wine. Add mussels. Cover tightly. Steam for five to six minutes (or just until mussels open). Serve with hot mussel-wine broth for dipping, on the half-shell. Cider or lemon juice and water can be substituted for the wine.

Mussels au Gratin

(cook to order)

Twelve mussels per order (prepared on half-shell in advance; see below)

Arrange filled half-shells on a greased broiler pan and brown under a moderate broiler heat for six to eight minutes.

Preparation method: 1 egg white 12 mussels
1 tsp. water 1½ tbsp. butter
½ cup white bread crumbs 1 thin slice bacon
1 tsp. chopped parsley salt and pepper

Beat egg white with water. In separate bowl, mix bread crumbs and parsley. Steam mussels slightly, just to open (or use pre-shucked meats). Remove mussels from shells and dip in eggs, then in bread crumbs. Put mussels back in half-shells and drizzle with a little melted butter. Top with small piece of bacon (1/12 of slice). Arrange on hotel pans in quantities desired and refrigerate until ready for use.

Roasted Mussels in the Shell

Scrub mussel shells thoroughly. Roast in an iron fry pan or in a shallow pan in a hot oven. When mussels open, pour the juice into a sauce pan and add the shucked mussels. For each 6 mussels, add a tablespoon of butter with a dash of salt and pepper.

Barbecued Mussel Kabobs

(cook to order)

12 mussels per order (skewers may be set up in advance)
5 stuffed olives
5 onion wedges (small sections)

Arrange mussels on skewers, alternating ingredients in the following order: two mussels, one olive, one onion wedge. Repeat until skewer is filled. Broil quickly, until just lightly browned. Serve with seasoned sauce.

Sauce suggestion: 1 cup mayonnaise 1 tbsp. Worcestershire
1 cup sour cream sauce
2 garlic cloves (crushed) 1 tsp. salt
½ cup chopped parsley 1 tsp. dry mustard
1 tsp paprika

Stir mixture until well blended.

Fried Mussels

(deep-fat fried to order)

Twelve mussels per order
Batter (use commercial batter mixes according to manufacturer's instructions, or make your own mix)

Dip mussels into batter and drop quickly into submerged basket of deep-fat fryer. Fry at 350°F to 375°F about three to five minutes or just until golden brown. Drain on paper toweling and serve hot.

Mussel Broth

Steam 3 pounds of cleaned mussels in 1 cup of water in which there is a small amount of onion, celery and parsley. Season the liquid with salt, pepper and butter. Serve hot.

For Bisque: Add an equal amount of milk to mussel broth. Thicken this, using ½ tbsp. of flour to each cup of liquid, boil up. Serve this with or without the addition of chopped mussels.

Seacoast Mussel Chowder (24 servings)

9 doz. mussels (shucked and bearded)	3/4 tsp. celery salt
6 cups cold water	3/4 tsp. pepper
1 1/2 lbs. salt pork, diced	2 tbsp. salt (or to taste)
3 tbsp. butter or margarine	9 cups pared potatoes, diced
6 medium onions, sliced	9 cups milk, scalded
6 tbsp. flour, all-purpose	

Place mussels with their natural liquid into pot and add water. Bring to boil. Drain, reserving the liquid.

Saute salt pork until golden, then add onions and cook until tender. Stir in flour, celery salt, pepper, salt, mussel liquid and potatoes. Cook, covered, 20 minutes or just until potatoes are tender. Add mussels, hot milk (do not boil), butter and add salt gradually to taste.

Mussels with Linguine (8-10 servings)

2 1/2 qt. mussels in shells (approx. 75 small mussels)	1 can (6 oz.) tomato paste
1/2 cup olive oil	1 1/2 tbsp. oregano
2 cloves garlic, finely minced	1/8 tsp. red pepper
2 onions, thinly sliced	1/2 tsp. black pepper
2 lemons, thinly sliced	2 tsp. dried basil
2 large cans (1 lb., 13 oz.) Italian tomatoes, mashed	1 1/2 tsp. salt
	2 cups red wine
	2 lbs. linguine

Sort, scrub and rinse mussels; trim byssus. Saute onion and garlic in oil in 6 qt. kettle. When onion is golden and soft, add lemon slices, tomatoes, tomato paste, basil, oregano, red wine, salt and peppers. Simmer over low heat for 25 minutes with pot covered. Add wine and simmer without the cover until sauce thickens--15 to 20 minutes. (Sauce may be prepared in advance--up to the addition of the mussels.) Add mussels to sauce, cover and cook over medium-high heat until the mussels open--approximately 5 minutes.

Cook linguine according to package directions and toss with two tablespoons olive oil to prevent sticking. Arrange linguine on a large tray. Cover with cooked mussels and tomato sauce. Serve immediately.

Stuffed Mussels (8 servings)

4 doz. medium-sized mussels in shells	2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 cup chopped parsley	1/2 tsp. salt
1 1/2 tbsp. dried basil	dash of black pepper
1 tbsp. crushed oregano	2 cups soft bread crumbs
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese	1/2 cup olive oil

Preheat oven to 500°F.

Sort and scrub the mussels under cold, running water; trim byssus. Blanch mussels in 6 qt. kettle to open shells (divide and cook mussels in two batches; toss each batch into 1/2 inch of boiling water; cover the pot and steam the mussels 1-2 minutes to open the shells; DO NOT COOK ANY LONGER.) Separate shells and discard one. Cut around each mussel to loosen.

Combine herbs and seasonings in a mixing bowl. Add the soft bread crumbs to the herb mixture and toss until well blended. Stir in the olive oil. Sprinkle equal parts of the mixture over the mussels. Arrange on a baking sheet and bake 3-4 minutes, until the crumb mixture is golden brown and crisp. AVOID OVER-COOKING. Serve hot.

Mussels a la Newburg (8 servings)

3 qts. mussels (approx. 100 small mussels)	
1 pint heavy cream	3 tbsp. margarine
3 oz. dry sherry	3 tbsp. flour
dash salt	3 egg yolks, beaten
dash nutmeg	8 slices white toast or patty shells
2-3 grains cayene pepper	

Sort and scrub mussels. Trim byssus around the edges. Blanch the mussels in 6 qt. kettle to open the shells (see under Stuffed Mussels). Remove the mussel meat with a sharp knife. Set aside. Hold the mussel broth for later use. Melt margarine in top of double-boiler. Blend in the flour and seasonings; cook until bubbly over direct heat. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the heavy cream and 1 c. mussel broth. Return to the heat and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Boil gently and stir for 1 minute or until thickened. Add a small amount of the hot sauce to the egg yolks, then

stir the egg yolk mixture back into the hot sauce. Add the sherry and cook for five minutes longer, stirring frequently. Add the mussel meats and stir in gently. Place the pan over hot water to hold for service.

Mussel Fritters

4 doz. large mussels	salt, pepper, nutmeg
3/4 cup fine bread crumbs	butter
1/2 cup freshly chopped cooked crabmeat	lemon quarters, parsley

Mix thoroughly 1/2 cup fine bread crumbs and 1/2 cup finely chopped cooked crabmeat. Season mixture to taste with salt, pepper and nutmeg.

Open mussels by blanching in boiling water until shells gape, or use 4 doz. large shucked mussels. Roll mussels in bread crumb mixture. Dip mussels in a fritter batter and again roll them in the bread crumb mixture. When ready to serve, saute quickly in melted butter until they are lightly browned. Serve garnished with lemon quarters, fresh parsley.

Baked Mussels

60 mussels	sliced bacon
salt, pepper	American cheese
1 tsp. chopped onion	

Prepare mussels and blanch to open. Remove from shells and place in buttered baking dish. Season with salt, pepper and onion. Cover with thin slices of bacon and cheese. Bake in moderate oven (350°F) for 15 minutes or until cheese is slightly melted.

Picnic Mussels

Mussels often provide the chief dish at Maine picnics. A kettle is placed over a brisk fire. When hot, a piece of butter the size of an egg is tossed in with minced clove of garlic, a cup of water and as many mussels as required. The kettle is covered. When the mussel shells open, they are cooked and can be eaten. Season to taste.

Note: Brush the mussels clean before cooking and remove the byssus thread before or after cooking.

Paella of Mussels

3 qts. cleaned mussels, steamed open	1/2 cup olive oil
4 cups hot mussel broth	1 tsp. saffron
3 cups rice	1 cup green peas
1/3 cup minced onion	12 thin slices hard
2 large cloves garlic	Portuguese sausage
	1 pimento cut into strips

Preheat oven to 350°F. If you do not have a paellero, the traditional pan, you will need a large shallow casserole with a lid in which to cook and serve it.

Drain the mussels after cooking and retain the liquid. Remove half the mussels from their shells and keep the others hot in their half-shells with a little cooking liquid.

Saute the onion and garlic until lightly colored. Remove garlic and add rice. Stir over moderate heat until slightly brown. While rice is browning, heat mussel broth with saffron until it becomes yellow then add to rice and onion mixture. After stirring, add peas, sausage and the mussels, which were removed from their shells, folding into the rice with wooden spoon. (This will be more like tossing a quick salad so as not to mash the ingredients.) Cover and bake in 350°F oven for about 15 minutes or when rice has absorbed all the broth. Before serving, arrange the mussels left in half-shells in a crown on the rice, the shell side in the rice, and garnish the center with strips of pimento. Serves 6.

(Courtesy of Sarah Hurlburt, Duxbury, Mass.)

Other Suggested Sauces

The natural liquor of cooked mussels is itself a delicious dip for mussels. It can also be thickened with hot cream, egg yolks or hollandaise sauce.

An interesting Chinese dip for steamed mussels can be made with 1 tablespoon of soy sauce, 1 teaspoon of vinegar, and 1 teaspoon of chopped ginger, chopped garlic and scallion (combined). Mix and serve in a dip bowl.

Mother's Tangy Baked Mussels

1/3 cup corn oil	1/4 tsp. pepper
1/2 cup chopped onion	3 tbsp. sugar
1/2 tsp. ginger	1 can cream of mushroom soup
1 tsp. salt	1/2 cup beer

Combine above ingredients and pour over two pounds of cleaned mussels. Sprinkle generously with paprika. Bake in moderate oven at 350°F at least one hour. Serve with steamed rice. Serves 4.

(Courtesy of Juanita E. Kashulines, Windham, N.H.)

Mussels in Snail Butter

This appetizer may be done days ahead and covered with foil, then frozen and ready to pop in the oven at the last minute.

2 doz. mussels	1 shallot
1/2 cup softened butter	3 large cloves garlic, pureed
1 tbsp. chopped parsley	1 slice raw bacon, minced
1 tbsp. lemon juice	salt and pepper

Steam well-scrubbed and bearded mussels in the usual manner until they open. (Frozen mussels may be used, if available.) Save half a shell for each mussel. Blend the remaining ingredients thoroughly. Put small amount of herb butter in each shell. Lay mussel on it. Cover with more butter and place them in single layer in shallow pans (pie tins). Heat oven to 400°F and bake for 15 to 20 minutes. Serve in cocktail plates with seafood forks or on a tray with toothpicks. They should be sizzling! Serves 4.

(Courtesy of Sarah Hurlburt, Duxbury, Mass.)