Aquaculture on Martha’s Vineyard

“Us vs. Them” Conflicts that Shaped the Industry

Rick Karney
Martha’s Vineyard Shellfish Group
Geographic isolation creates “Island vs Off-Island” attitude

Local control and 6 Towns leads to “Town vs Town” conflicts

Resolution: Aquaculture operations are small and local and limited to 3 of the 6 towns
Private Aquaculture vs the Wild Fishery

Historically,

- Strong tradition of the public common
- Few private leases
  - In the 1950’s, privately managed oyster beds taken back and “returned to the public”
  - In the 1960’s private aquaculture proponents forced to move Off-Island to pursue venture

Resolution: “Public Aquaculture”
  - In the 1970’s Towns begin hatchery seeding to enhance wild stocks
Private Aquaculture vs the Wild Fishery

Resolution: In 1995, the Martha’s Vineyard “Private Aquaculture Initiative” retrained displaced fishermen in shellfish aquaculture - aquaculture leases available only to local fishermen; who “evolve” into oyster farmers
Oyster Farmers vs the Predators

Tidal-Powered Nurseries

Rack & Bag Grow-out
Tidal-Powered FLUPSY
Rack & Bag Grow-out
Grow-out in Suspended Trays
Oyster Farmers vs Biofouling

Resolution: Pressure-treated lumber, bottom paints
Resolution: Air drying; brine dips
Resolution: Tumbling
Resolution: Floating bags
Oyster Farmers vs Waterfront Homeowners

Resolution:

- Be a good neighbor

And.....
A public relations campaign !!!
“Taste of the Vineyard”
Raw bar
Oysters from Katama Yield Sweet Profits
As New Vineyard Industry Hits Its Stride

Oysters from the Farm

By Tom Dunlop
Photographs by Peter Simon

You decide at the last second to take a chance. Nobody at your table remembers ever seeing one — an authentic Vineyard-grown oyster listed on an Island menu in the summertime.

Not for a generation, any way; the inland ponds in the hot seasons are too brackish and bacterial. This word “cultured” makes you suspicious, and the price (a dime or two shy of two dollars per oyster) makes you blush.

The way the waiter’s raving, you’d think they’d been raised by hand.

Actually, he says, they were.

It was human hands that put these oysters in the places where they could grow best. Twice each day their whole lives long, deep green seawater, loaded with oceanic nutrients, had come swirling through the entrance to Edgartown harbor, rushed through the narrows off the mouth of Caleb’s Pond and washed over the underwater hills and gullies sweeping across the shallows of Katama Bay. There the oysters had hung in bags from rafts, literally suspended in the current, swallowing this microbial soup as it filled and darkened the bay.

Warm and sweetened in the shallow water, this broth had poured back out after the turning of the tide. Fortifying and pure as the concoction was to the crop on the flood, it was just a tad more potent and fattening on the ebb.
Did you know?
Shellfish Aquaculture is GOOD for the Environment!

- Filter-feeding shellfish improve water quality.
- Shellfish farming provides habitat for fish and improves species diversity.
- Shellfish aquaculture is sustainable and good for the environment.

Shellfish Aquaculture on Cape Cod
A Traditional and Sustainable Industry for Barnstable County

Do Something Good for the Environment, Eat a Cultured Oyster and Support a new “Green” Industry for Martha’s Vineyard!

- As they graze on their diet of natural microscopic plant life, filter-feeding shellfish, like the oyster, play a crucial role in maintaining a balanced marine environment and help keep our coastal waters sparkling clean.
- As nature’s own water filtration system, oysters reduce algal blooms, clean turbid water, remove nitrogen, enhance water clarity, promote eel-grass survival and provide habitat for other sea life.
- Every 100,000 rapidly growing cultured oysters eliminate the nitrogen pollution from about 27 people living in the watershed.
- Our oysters are produced with earth-friendly technologies. The seeds are produced in the nation’s first Solar Shellfish Hatchery. Nursery systems use natural tidal energies to pump water to the growing shellfish. Local farmers employ Best Management Practices to protect the environment.

Brochures
Bumper stickers

Do Something Good For The Environment, Eat More Aquacultured Shellfish!
Aquaculture vs Regulators

Resolution: Political pressure? Legislation? Education of regulators? Other ???