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HOW TO THROW AN OYSTER PARTY

Hosting made easy with serving tips and ready-to-serve platters from Oyster Boy

One of fall's greatest treats for the finely palated is flavourful, firm, succulent oysters from Canada's seafood laden coastlines. As oysters enter their peak season, parties begin incorporating the delicacy onto their serving table. While serving oysters may seem like a daunting task, this chic addition to a party menu need not create panic and confusion. With a little help from Queen Street West's Oyster Boy, the most novice oyster taster can be an aficionado in no time.

While the Oyster Boy restaurant opened just over a year ago, the inspiring minds behind it have had their hands filled with oysters for over a decade. After working together at The Hobby Horse pub in Uxbridge, Adam Colquhoun and John Petcoff turned their mutual love for oysters into a successful catering business. Due to intense demand, they expanded into a wholesale distributor in 1995. Originally operating out of Adam's basement and dining room, the wholesale business is now a key component of the popular Oyster Boy, supplying oysters to over 50 fine restaurants and hotels.

With abundant knowledge of oysters and oyster culture, the team at Oyster Boy is the perfect resource for those interested in learning how to prepare and serve oysters themselves. Curious hosts and hostesses can sign up for a shucking course at the restaurant to learn how to shuck an oyster like an expert. Then, they can choose to pick up unshucked oysters packed in Oyster Boy papers bags with ice, or pre-made, ready-to-serve platters complete with all the appropriate garnishes. Orders of up to 100 oysters come shucked and on platters at the restaurant rate.

The platters are accompanied with grated horseradish, sliced lemon and three freshly-made sauces: seafood sauce with olives and capers, hot pepper sauce w/ ginger and garlic and red wine vinegar w/ chopped shallots. "The acid in the sauces complement the natural salts in the oyster and bring out the flavour for maximum enjoyment," says Colquhoun. "Oyster Boy offers only the best oysters at the best time of year, ensuring that customers receive the highest quality product."

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For those who want to dive into the oyster party, but aren't quite ambitious enough to do it themselves, Oyster Boy caters parties and events, allowing guests to watch as the expert team shucks fresh oysters before their eyes.

Colquhoun, one of the top shuckers in the country and a longtime oyster enthusiast, recommends an assortment of beverages and foods that best add to the flavour of oysters. "Steam Whistle Pilsner is a great complement, as well as dark beers such as Guinness or Wellington County Ale from a local brewery in Guelph," suggests Colquhoun.

The support for Canadian goods continues with the wine selections. "Any Ontario wine such as Malivoire Pinot Gris or Henry of Pelham Riesling are excellent to serve with oysters, as well as fine champagne if it's for a special occasion," explains Colquhoun. He also recommends unsalted soda crackers and sweeter breads such as pumpernickel to offer a nice contrast to the salty oysters.

Oyster Boy is located at 872 Queen Street West and is open seven days a week, from 9 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. Wholesale orders and shucking classes can be scheduled by calling Oyster Boy at 416.534.3432 between 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday-Friday and after 2 p.m. on Sundays.