

Oyster Boy teaches shucking at eatery

Adam Colquhoun is a man who loves oysters.

He's always admired the whitish green mulloscs — so much so he's constantly trimming their jagged edges to achieve the proper roundness in his Queen Street West restaurant.

The 37-year-old restaurateur has a long history with the so-called underwater aphrodisiacs.

Before opening his aptly named eatery Oyster Boy in 2000, he catered and wholesaled to more than 50 GTA restaurants. The Scarborough-born Colquhoun has travelled to each one of his distributors where he observed their harvesting methods and visited their surrounding bays. He's so safe that during the winter months he smells each individual oyster before serving it to customers.

"Oysters are high-end products, so it takes a lot of care and service. For me, it's something great to



PHOTOS COURTESY OF OYSTER BOY

Above and inset: Adam Colquhoun demonstrates the art of shucking oysters at Oyster Boy.

sell," he says.

"People who like oysters are really passionate about them. Even people who don't like oysters get passionate about it. And anything that gets people that emotional has money in-

volved."

Now the tricks of the trade are being revealed in a two-hour interactive class every weekend. Amidst boxes of oysters sitting in packed ice, he'll teach the perfect shuck

and dish the inside scoop for proper oyster party planning.

The class begins with a tour of the restaurant, which is packed from floor to ceiling with turn-of-the-century oyster canisters,

maps of popular oyster centres and signed photos of Canadians such as Mike Myers and Stompin' Tom Connors.

Colquhoun, who's won shucking titles in Ontario and Eastern Canada and places consistently in the Top 5 at the nationals, explains their nutritional values, cultivation process, biology and history. There's even a plastic mesh teabag on display, the large contraption where oysters sit underwater for five to 10 years.

But then comes the real work — yup, the shuck. He takes a wooden board with a small, raised handle to stabilize the oyster or on top of a small damp towel. After you learn how to properly hold the shucking knife and position your body, you gently pry the shell open and follow down the side.

Once its mouth is open, place a small cut on its abductor muscles, and slurp! Down the hatch it goes. You



can always add some sauce. Colquhoun recommends a red wine vinegar with chopped shallots, hot sauce or a bit of seafood sauce.

"It's all about the clean shuck. There shouldn't be any grit, blood, and it should be totally separate from the bottom so the oyster comes right off. It's really important that it doesn't look all hacked up," he says.

Oyster Boy's two-hour classes run every Saturday and Sunday at 12 p.m., \$30 per person, and he provides a shucking knife, T-shirt and oysters to take home. Call 416.534.3432 for more information.

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