

Eat
SCOTTISH
SHELLFISH
PRESS PACK

Inspiring content to champion
sustainable Scottish mussels and
oysters



OYSTERS

The Facts

Scottish oysters are a true coastal treasure, carefully farmed in pristine waters. Simply open, serve, and enjoy!

Sustainably produced, tasty and rich in nutrients. We are on a mission to ensure oysters are celebrated as one of Scotland's most delicious superfoods!



Farmed Oysters have one of the lowest carbon footprints

Requiring no feed or fertilisers, they have one of the lowest carbon footprints of any farmed protein in the UK. Farmed naturally, these little filter feeders thrive on plankton and algae brought in by the ever-moving tides.

Farming oysters supports marine eco-systems

By filtering nutrients from the water, oysters help regulate the balance of phytoplankton and can reduce harmful algal blooms. Healthier water contributes to a more resilient eco-system. In fact, adult oysters can filter up to 150 litres of water per day.

Farmed oysters contain 13 essential micronutrients

They rank as the most nutritious amongst the nation's top seafood choices and can contribute to overall health and wellbeing.

Farmed oysters are more versatile than you think

Shuck open and serve fresh from the shell, lightly fry in tempura batter or add a variety of toppings and grill.

OYSTERS

The Facts



2.4 MILLION

Scottish Oysters are farmed each year

Source: Scottish Marine Directorate



2-3 YEARS

for oysters to grow from seed (spat) to harvest



13 MICRONUTRIENTS

Essential for overall health and wellbeing

Source: Edinburgh University Research commissioned by Scottish Shellfish



FILTER 150L OF WATER

Each oyster can filter 150 litres of water per day.

Feeding on the natural plankton it contains.

Source: Blue Marine Foundation



AMONGST THE LOWEST GWP*

of any farmed protein in the UK.

*GWP = Global Warming Potential

Source: Yaghubi et al. (2021), Nutrients; University of Stirling

MEET THE OYSTER FARMERS

Although there is no official published data on the number of oyster farms in Scotland, we estimate this to be around 20-35 sites.



Winston Brown

Shetland Oysters
is tucked away in the pristine waters of Shetland. Oyster farming for just 10 years he has utilised 30 years as a marine engineer to develop bespoke aquaculture processes suited to the unique tidal system in Shetland. For Winston farming is not just a job it's a 'passion'..



Judith Vajk

Known as Oban's "Oyster Lady", Judith Vajk discovered oysters in Paris aged 21. She and her late husband Hugo moved to Loch Creran in 1995 to run Caledonian Oysters. Now running the farm with her son Angus, the award-winning grower also welcomes visitors on guided oyster farm tours.



Patrick Blow

Cape Wrath Oysters has been cultivating oysters along Scotland's northern coast, focusing on sustainable methods and pristine waters near Cape Wrath. Building strong relationships with local suppliers, he has expanded production while maintaining quality. His work reflects a dedication to responsible aquaculture and the heritage of shellfish.



Andre Hughes

Loch Fyne Oysters, Founded in 1978 in a roadside shack in Cairndow, Loch Fyne Oysters has grown oysters on the shores of Loch Fyne for nearly 50 years. As demand grew, it partnered with growers across the islands and Scotland. In October 2025, it gained ASC accreditation, reflecting its commitment to responsible aquaculture.



Gordon Turnbull

Isle of Mull Oysters continues the family tradition, managing the oyster farm founded by his father on the Isle of Mull. He combines generational knowledge with sustainable practices, ensuring exceptional quality while nurturing the island's marine environment and supporting the future of Scottish oyster farming.



Tristan Hugh-Jones

Since 1996 he has managed the historic **Loch Ryan Oyster Fishery** Company in southwest Scotland, one of the few remaining wild native oyster beds in Europe. Under his stewardship, Loch Ryan oysters are harvested sustainably and supplied to top restaurants. Tristan is active in the broader shellfish community, serving on industry committees and supporting oyster restoration initiatives across Europe

THE UNIQUE HISTORY OF SCOTTISH OYSTERS



Oysters have shaped Scotland's coastal story for centuries, woven into the rhythms of sea lochs, estuaries, and island communities.

Long before modern aquaculture, native oysters were harvested from sheltered waters and traded along coastal routes. Today, Scotland's oyster sector blends this heritage with carefully managed cultivation — a product defined by history and place. From historic native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) beds to the later introduction of Pacific oysters, the story reflects adaptation, resilience, and stewardship of fragile marine environments.

Scottish oyster production has grown from small, local operations, when harvesting was once seasonal and labour-intensive, and knowledge passed through generations of coastal families.

Modern oyster farming now typically involves:

- Cultivation in sheltered sea lochs and tidal sites
- Regular grading and careful husbandry
- Long growth cycles prioritising flavour and shell strength

This approach — working with natural conditions rather than against them — reflects centuries of experience living and working along the coastlines of Scotland.

Why Place and Heritage Matter

Scottish oysters are inseparable from their geography and the different flavours reflect the environments in which they are grown. Many farms lie along the west coast, Highlands, and islands, where cool Atlantic waters create ideal growing conditions. These landscapes are productive and culturally significant, linking aquaculture with traditional blue economy livelihoods.

Oyster farming extends coastal skills and local ecosystem knowledge, ensuring:

- Coastal expertise is preserved
- Marine environments are monitored and respected
- Local economies remain connected to the sea
- Practices reflect long-term stewardship

Oyster Farming is Helping to Support Restoration

Scotland's oyster history includes abundance and decline. Native populations fell in the 18th and 19th centuries due to overharvesting and environmental pressures. Modern farming emerged as a sustainable alternative, maintaining supply while protecting wild stocks. Pacific oysters allow consistent production, while restoration supports native oyster recovery alongside responsible farming. And, commercial hatcheries, supported by the farmed oyster sector, provide the breeding capacity and biosecurity that restoration projects rely on.

Why It Matters

Consumers seek provenance and authenticity. Scottish oysters offer:

- Traceability to specific coastal waters
- Slow growth shaped by natural conditions
- Heritage rooted in shellfish culture
- A direct producer-to-plate connection

Each oyster reflects its environment, from salinity to tidal movement, creating subtle regional flavour differences.

For chefs and retailers, they combine provenance with reliability, delivering consistent grading, strong storytelling, high traceability, and a premium product linked to heritage.



In a food system defined by scale and speed, Scottish oysters represent a slower, environment-led approach.

Today, their story continues through farmers working the same coastal waters that sustained generations before them, carrying forward a history of restoration, adaptation and respect for the sea.

WHY SHELLFISH MATTERS IN THE NATIONAL FOOD DEBATE

As the UK navigates rising food insecurity, climate change, public health challenges, and pressures on domestic supply chains, the question is no longer just what tastes good, but what makes sense for the future. Scottish farmed mussels and oysters offer a model solution.

Climate & Net Zero

Food production drives significant greenhouse gas emissions, making protein choices important. Farmed shellfish are among the UK's lowest-carbon animal proteins, requiring no feed, freshwater, fertilisers, or arable land, with minimal infrastructure. As filter feeders, mussels and oysters grow entirely on naturally occurring plankton, offering a resource-efficient model for low-impact aquaculture.

Marine Ecosystems & Biodiversity

Unlike many animal proteins, shellfish farming benefits marine environments. Mussels and oysters filter water, remove excess nutrients, provide habitats, and need no chemical inputs, supporting biodiversity and water quality goals.

Food Security & Domestic Resilience

Global shocks reveal risks in relying on imports. Scottish shellfish are grown locally, harvested year-round, scalable without feed, and independent of imported grain or soy, contributing a stable, resilient protein source.

Public Health & Nutrition

The UK faces deficiencies in iodine, iron, and vitamin B12. Mussels and oysters provide 13 essential micronutrients, high-quality protein, omega-3s, and low saturated fat, making them nutrient-dense, low-impact foods for both human and planetary health.

Supporting Communities & Family Businesses

Shellfish farming supports rural and island communities across Scotland. Nearly all mussel production is co-operative, run by growers for growers. Family-run businesses provide skilled employment and strengthen fragile coastal economies, blending large-scale supply with community-focused models.

The national food challenge is simple: produce nutritious food with lower environmental impact while strengthening domestic resilience. Scottish farmed shellfish offer a clear example of how this balance can be achieved.

MUSSELS

The Facts

There are over 20 Scottish farming businesses all working hard to bring the best quality, freshest mussels to our plates. Each one has their own unique story to tell. Often family run businesses that have learnt the skills of growing mussels over a number of years and have a genuine passion for the product they are growing.



Farmed mussels maintain a healthy marine environment

By acting as water filters they are helping to keep the water clean by filtering excess nutrients like algae. The ropes on which they grow also allow other species to settle and thrive, creating its own ecosystem.

Farming Mussels helps protect the environment

They have the lowest carbon footprint of any other farmed protein in the UK. By encouraging people to eat more it will benefit long term food security in a world with depleting resources but growing populations.

Farmed Rope-Grown Mussels are widely available in UK supermarkets

Most commonly found shell-on, cooked and vacuum packed. They come prepared with sauces for added convenience. However, you can also find live shell on mussels in selected supermarkets and you will always find them in your local fishmongers.

Farmed mussels are exceptionally good value

At a time when lots of household budgets are stretched, mussels provide an affordable protein source for the whole family. They're easy to prepare and cook, taking as little as 5 minutes and work with lots of different flavours.

MUSSELS

The Facts



11,690 TONNES

of Scottish Mussels are farmed each year

Source: Scottish Marine Directorate



2-3 YEARS

for mussels to grow from seed (spat) to harvest



13 MICRONUTRIENTS

Essential for overall health and wellbeing

Source: Edinburgh University Research commissioned by Scottish Shellfish



FILTER 40L OF WATER

Each mussel can filter 40 litres of water per day.
Feeding on the natural plankton it contains.



AMONGST THE LOWEST GWP*

of any farmed protein in the UK.

*GWP = Global Warming Potential

Source: Yaghubi et al. (2021), Nutrients; University of Stirling

MEET THE MUSSEL FARMERS

This is a selection of growers from around Scotland, there are in fact around 12 registered mussel farming businesses



Sam Laurenson

Blueshell Mussels are based in Shetland. Sam has grown up with mussel farming and is now working alongside his father Michael and uncles. Established in the late 1990s, and now the UK's largest rope-grown mussel producer. It operates multiple farm sites around the islands, manages harvesting and processing.



Alan Byrne

Fassfern Mussels grows its mussels in Loch Eil, a sea loch on Scotland's west coast near Fort William. Alan and his brother Lawrie have been farming there since 1999 due to the plankton rich, clean water of the North Atlantic.



Cameron McLean

Inverlussa Mussels was founded by Douglas Wilson on the Isle of Mull in the late 1980s. Joined by farm manager, Cameron in 2005, the operation has grown and adopted modern rope-grown cultivation methods to become one of Scotland's pioneering mussel producers.



Michael Tait

Shetland Mussels was founded in 1997 by Michael, his brother Richard, and their father Lollie. From the start, they've taken great care to work with the environment, not against it—so much so that some of their mussels are even shared with the local Eider ducks! Michael says he still gets a thrill from producing such a low-impact, delicious product, all by simply hanging a rope in the water.



James MacDonald

Loch Fyne Golden Shell Hebridean Mussels are sustainably farmed in the pristine waters of Loch Roag, Outer Hebrides. Operated by Loch Fyne Oysters, now owned by Associated Seafoods, these mussels are ASC-certified, known for their sweet, tender flavour and firm texture.

THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE BEHIND SCOTTISH MUSSELS



Almost every rope-grown mussel harvested in Scotland is organised through a farmer-owned co-operative. Co-operatives are the original social enterprises, run by small producers, for small producers ensuring they can create value collectively and return it to their communities.

The majority of Scottish farmed mussels are marketed collectively through Scottish Shellfish, a producer-led organisation established 35 years ago by growers, for growers. It is owned and run by its farming members and exists to support their businesses, families and coastal communities.

What Does It Mean in Practice?

Unlike vertically integrated global seafood corporations, Scotland's mussel farmers chose to collaborate. Through their co-operative model, growers:

- Pool marketing and sales expertise
- Coordinate supply into UK retail and foodservice
- Maintain consistent quality and traceability standards
- Share risk in a challenging marine environment
- Reinvest value back into farming businesses

The structure allows small and medium-sized family farms - many located in remote coastal and island communities - to achieve scale and compete effectively in national markets while retaining local ownership.





Why Place and Heritage Matter

Scottish shellfish farms are often family-run, operating in remote sea lochs and island waters. Their location, with cool, clean waters, makes the product unique. Distance from customers poses challenges, but collaboration allows small producers to pool distribution and access markets collectively. For many, mussel farming is multi-generational—tied to both livelihood and place.

The co-operative structure ensures value stays in rural economies, sustains local skills and jobs, and prioritises long-term marine stewardship—stability crucial for fragile coastal regions.

Why It Matters to Consumers

Consumers increasingly want to know where their food comes from. A farmer-owned model offers transparency, a direct connection between producer and plate, and clear community impact. Buying Scottish farmed mussels supports independent families working together, rather than anonymous global supply chains.

Why It Matters to Retail and Foodservice

The co-operative model provides coordinated year-round supply, quality assurance, shared standards, scale without losing provenance, and 100% traceability. It blends collective marketing resilience with individual grower authenticity.

A Different Food Model

While much of the food system focuses on consolidation, Scotland's mussel sector shows a model based on shared ownership, collective responsibility, and local economic benefit. It's a market-facing co-operative grounded in community and environmental stewardship, supporting one of the UK's most sustainable and nutrient-rich proteins.

RESOURCES

MEDIA SUPPORT

RADIO INTERVIEWS

Our team of industry experts are available to cover every topic relating to Scottish Farmed Mussels or Oysters.

PODCASTS

Our industry has a great story to tell and who better to tell it than the people that work in the industry. Real people with real stories.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Let's create together: from fresh shellfish for your kitchen to video support and farm visits, we'd love to collaborate.

MEDIA READY IMAGES

High-quality images are available for editorial use. Tell us your angle and we'll send a tailored selection.

PRESS TRIPS

We arrange farm visits for journalists, chefs and content creators across Scotland's west coast and islands, including Mull and Shetland.



For further information contact:

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