

Football, Food, and Drink - Grilled Oysters and the 0-fer

Written by {ga=mattvan1}

Sunday, November 28 2010 5:00 AM - Last Updated Saturday, November 27 2010 11:45 PM



The greater Houston metro area population grew by 24% in 2009 and is approaching 6 million residents. I'll save the long dissertation on multiculturalism and the benefits of living in a global village, and get to the point. Many people you meet in Houston are not originally from Houston. This may not seem particularly relevant, except if you are a football fan. Then it gets really interesting - and somewhat problematic - on Sundays during the fall.

“And do as adversaries do in law, strive mightily, but eat and drink as friends.”

Pretty sure that when Shakespeare first penned those words in “The Taming of the Shrew” his intent was not to describe a group of friends cheering for different teams, although it is a fairly accurate picture of what happens in our neighborhood. Every weekend brings a different crowd, but the usual suspects are fans of the Browns, Texans, Giants, and Cowboys. In general, we tend to “support” (meaning some type of empathetic quasi-cheering) for each others’ teams, with the exception of the Cowboys. Dallas fans are tolerated, but are essentially left by themselves. As it should be.

Unless you own a sports bar, the ability to satisfy the viewing needs of a disparate number of fans is directly related to the NFL schedule-maker, DirecTV’s Sunday Ticket, the weather, the miracle of DVRs, at least two televisions and 50 foot runs of coax. It is highly recommended to keep remote controls out of the hands of amateurs.

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Last Sunday was the perfect intersection of all of the factors required for what appeared, at the outset, to be a glorious day of football. The weather was unseasonably mild and the schedule broke in our favor. Noon games were Browns@Jags on one TV, Texans@Jets on the other. Nice three o'clock matchup of Colts@Pats, followed by Giants@Eagles for the nightcap. The lone Cowboy fan was forced to make do with an occasional peek at the Game Mix channel. As it should be.

The menu was pretty straightforward - oysters on the grill and jambalaya. None of us are from Louisiana or fans of the Saints, although I did live in New Orleans for a time. The inspiration for the oysters came from a stop at a Cajun themed restaurant after watching a local high school game a few weeks back. It seemed simple – oysters on the half shell grilled with a butter-garlic sauce. I had toyed with the idea of ordering from oyster farms in Washington State, but the shipping costs were outrageous. We found a local seafood purveyor and picked up a half a sack of Gulf oysters for \$30. Kate's Fish, in the Westside Market, would be a good bet for North East Ohioans who wanted fresh oysters. If you have ever watched an experienced seafood barman shuck oysters, you know how easy it looks. If you have ever tried it yourself, you also know it is both frustrating and dangerous. Just like being a Browns fan.

The experts all advise a special oyster knife to cut the muscle which holds the two halves of the shell together. We used a flat head screw driver and a pair of channel locks. Not elegant but effective. Oysters, like clams and mussels, will open with heat, so after enjoying a few raw ones we simply threw the rest on the grill over high heat until they had opened part way, then used the channel locks to pry off the top shell and returned the oyster in the half shell to the grill to continue cooking. The shells become extremely hot, so tongs and oven mitts were a necessity. Once the oyster liquid began to bubble, we filled the shell with the rich butter-garlic sauce and continued cooking for another 5 minutes. A shake or two of hot sauce and a sprinkle of parsley with a squeeze of lemon and they were ready. And absolutely fantastic.

I wish I could say the same about the outcome of the games last week. It was nice to see altruistic behavior exhibited by the Browns. Refusing all of the gifts bestowed upon them by Jacksonville was a great example of selfless behavior and a nice way to start the holiday season. It looked for a time as if the Texans were going to upset the Jets in New York. True to form, the Houston pass defense met the challenge of a road win against a top team and crumbled in the closing seconds. Eric Wright, in everyone's dog house, would be the number one corner for the Texans. Think about that for a moment. And finally, to complete the 0-3 day, Eli Manning forgets how to slide and fumbles with the Giants driving late in the 4th for the tying score.

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No one went home happy. But at least everyone was full.

Grilled Oysters

1/2 cup unsalted butter, room temperature

1 pinch [kosher salt](#)

1 teaspoon [fresh ground black pepper](#)

1 tablespoon [garlic](#) , Minced

4 tablespoons [pecorino romano cheese](#)

1 pinch [cayenne](#)

1 pinch [white pepper](#)

1 teaspoon [lemon juice](#)

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1 teaspoon [Italian parsley](#) , Minced

2 dozen oysters, freshly shucked, on the half shell

Directions

Wisk together all ingredients except oysters and lemon wedges

Heat a charcoal or gas grill to medium high

Please oysters in their half shell on the grill and let them cook for a few minutes until the liquid starts to bubble

Top the oyster with a generous amount of the sauce until the shell is filled

Continue to cook until the sauce is bubbly and the cheese takes on a nice caramel color

Sprinkle with fresh chopped parsely and serve immediately

Pass hot sauce on the side