

# Top 15 restaurants serving oysters in Charleston

BY PARKER MILNER [PMILNER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM](mailto:PMILNER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM)

SEP 13, 2023



A shellfish tower waits to be served at The Royal Tern on Johns Island on Thursday, Jan. 3, 2019. File/Staff

BY LAUREN PETRACCA [LPETRACCA@POSTANDCOURIER.COM](mailto:LPETRACCA@POSTANDCOURIER.COM)

Restaurants serving [oysters](#) are plentiful in Charleston.

From casual counter service to white tablecloth fine dining, here are a few places to start your journey:

## [167 Raw](#)

### **193 King St., downtown Charleston**

In 2014, College of Charleston alumnus Jesse Sandole opened 167 Raw as an extension of his family's seafood market at 167 Hummock Pond Road in Nantucket, Mass. The restaurant served lobster rolls, ceviche, raw and fried oysters, pastrami-style swordfish and more. It [relocated to King Street](#) in 2020. [167 Sushi Bar](#) now resides in its old East Bay Street location.

## **Bowens Island Restaurant**

### **1870 Bowens Island Road, James Island**

It's hard to argue with an evening at this spot five minutes from [Folly Beach](#). Enjoy cold beer and fresh oysters picked from the waters surrounding the 13-acre island daily while watching the sunset.

The [75-year-old establishment](#), declared a James Beard Foundation American Classic, is an essential introduction to steamed oysters. But don't expect white tablecloth service. At Bowens, piles of oysters are dumped onto half or full trays, and guests are handed oyster knives for self-shucking. This, and the unmatched setting, makes a meal here an immersive experience and prerequisite to a classic Lowcountry oyster roast.

---

---

## **Chubby Fish**

### **252 Coming St., downtown Charleston**

[Chef/owner James London](#) features what could be described as a locally focused oyster-on-the-half-shell offering, with four of the six options coming from South Carolina.

Developing strong relationships with local purveyors has helped London bolster his supply. Steamboat Creek Oyster Farm, Barrier Island Oyster Co. and Braden Oyster Farm are among the farms London works with consistently.

#### **FOOD**

**Raw oysters remain a Charleston restaurant mainstay, despite low profit margins**

**BY PARKER MILNER [PMILNER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM](mailto:PMILNER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM)**

## **Delaney Oyster House**

### **115 Calhoun St., downtown Charleston**

[Delaney's](#) offers a rotating selection of oysters that are refreshingly cold and without a speck of shell to pollute their cleanly shucked meat. Even better, the varieties are clearly labeled with tags affixed to bamboo picks. Delaney offers at least six types of fresh oysters, along with peel-and-eat shrimp and caviar and a variety of small and large cooked seafood plates.

## **Fleet Landing Restaurant & Bar**

### **186 Concord St., downtown Charleston**

Fleet Landing is owned by Tradd and Weesie Newton and is housed in a 1940s-era naval debarkation building. It might just be the only downtown oyster-serving waterfront restaurant. Visited by the likes of [celebrity chef Andrew Zimmern](#), Fleet Landing serves oysters on the half-shell with house-made cocktail sauce.

---

---

## **Gillie's Seafood**

### **805 Folly Road, James Island**

The top of [Gillie's](#) menu is devoted to grilled and fried seafood platters, with 10 options ranging from local favorites like flounder to more far-off specialties like gator and clam strips (\$18 to \$24 for single platters). There are also fried oysters, which can be ordered with sides like collards and cornbread or inside a taco topped with "Bam" sauce.

## **Leon's Oyster Shop**

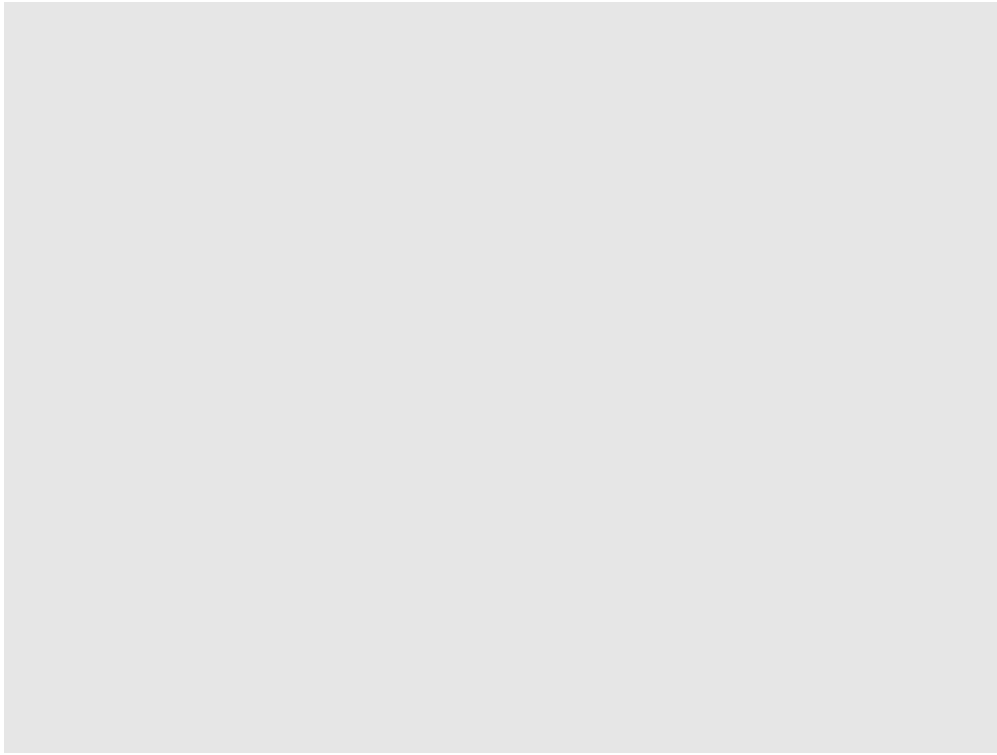
### **698 King St., downtown Charleston**

Since opening in early 2014, Leon's has won over Charleston by excelling in the [fried chicken and oyster departments](#). Located in a converted auto body shop, this spot serves raw and char-grilled oysters, along with a fried oyster roll topped with avocado and comeback sauce.

## **NICO Oysters + Seafood**

### **201 Coleman Blvd., Mount Pleasant**

In 2017, chef Nico Romo opened [NICO Oysters + Seafood](#), flaunting a menu filled with fresh seafood. Inside the buzzing restaurant, cooked dishes include an array of classic French preparations, such as meuniere, merguez and gratin, as well as fried fish, calamari and oysters.



Oysters and shrimp served for the lunch crowd at Leon's Oyster Shop. File/Grace Beahm Alford/Staff  
BY GRACE BEAHM ALFORD GBEAHM@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

---

Before opening, Romo embarked on a journey up the coast alongside a small group of colleagues. They traveled by van to eight oyster farms: Island Creek Oysters in Duxbury, Mass.; Glidden Point Oyster Farm in Newcastle, Maine; Mook Sea Farm in Walpole, Maine; Bangs Island Mussels in Portland, Maine; Nonesuch Oysters in Scarborough, Maine; Rappahannock Oyster Co. in Topping, Va.; White Stone Oyster Co. in White Stone, Va.; and Jarrett Bay Oysters in Down East Carteret County, N.C.

The trip helped Romo establish a relationship with farmers he uses to directly source NICO's eight to 12 rotating oysters. Along with a few South Carolina selections, NICO serves oysters from Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Virginia and Canada.

## **Pearlz Oyster Bar**

**153 East Bay St., downtown Charleston**

**2 Magnolia Road, West Ashley**

Looking for affordable happy hour half-shells or [oyster shooters](#)? Pearlz is your spot.

## Rappahannock Oyster Bar

### **701 East Bay St., downtown Charleston**

This business started in 2001 when Travis Croxton and his cousin, Ryan, took over their family's century-old oyster operation. The aquaculture company has been at the forefront of cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay and restoring its reputation as a premier oyster source. They operate restaurants in Richmond and Topping, Va., Los Angeles and an oyster bar in Union Market, a Washington, D.C., establishment named one of the nation's best by the Wall Street Journal.

In Charleston, [Rappahannock](#) can be found in the Cigar Factory development alongside Mercantile & Mash, Barrelli Barber and a handful of other businesses.

---

In addition to its own clams and oysters, Rappahannock serves a few South Carolina oysters, as well as clams, ceviche and peel-and-eat shrimp. Beyond the raw bar, dishes include a fish Milanese, seafood paella and shrimp-and-grits.

FOOD

15 James Island restaurants to visit on the way to Folly Beach

BY PARKER MILNER [PMILNER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM](mailto:PMILNER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM)

## Sullivan's Fish Camp

### **2019 Middle St., Sullivan's Island**

At [this stylish restaurant](#), oysters are served raw with champagne mignonette, baked with lemon horseradish butter or fried with cucumber salad.

## Tavern & Table

### **100 Church St., Mount Pleasant**

Located along Shem Creek, this restaurant offers three types of oysters. The waterfront restaurant opened in December 2014. It was the dream-child of co-founders Andy Palmer, Jeff Condon, and Dianne and Cecil Crowley. In 2022, the team transitioned ownership to Palmer and Condon, bringing their decades-long journey as partners in restaurants full circle. Both Palmer and Condon worked together for the Crowleys at Wild Wing Cafe for more than 20 years.

## [The Darling Oyster Bar](#)

### **513 King St., downtown Charleston**

This downtown spot serves its oysters on the half shell or baked with butter and breadcrumbs.

Anchored by an oval-shaped street-facing oyster bar, [The Darling](#) serves seafood-centric entrees, sandwiches, sides and desserts, like the s'mores chocolate mousse with bruléed fluff and graham crackers.

---

---

## [The Ordinary](#)

### **544 King St., downtown Charleston**

Sky-high seafood towers arrive with local oysters, clams, pâté, shrimp and caviar, while the rest of the menu is made up of cold and hot plates from executive chef Tori Schumacher. The Ordinary's crispy oyster sliders have long been among its cult-favorite bites.

[The Ordinary](#) serves raw oysters from four South Carolina purveyors: Steamboat Creek, Barrier Island, Dave "Clammer Dave" Belanger and Frank Roberts of Lady's Island Oysters, described as "the godfather of aquaculture in the Southeast."

## [The Royal Tern](#)

### **3005 Maybank Highway, Johns Island**

It's not uncommon for local restaurateurs to source oysters from outside of South Carolina, and there are advantages to doing so.

Sampling sweet and silky Beausoleil bivalves from New Brunswick, Canada, next to deeply cupped Love Shucks from Maine can help diners distinguish the varying flavor profiles of oysters sourced from up and down the East Coast.

"Generally, I'll try to keep something from four different regions so we have a variety," said David Pell, [The Royal Tern's](#) executive chef. "It's all the same oyster, but they just vary depending on the environment where they are being grown."

---

---

Pell keeps Beausoleils and Blue Points on the menu at all times, using the latter for raw and baked preparations. Blue Points on the half shell cost 80 cents to source; others, including the local bivalves he gets from Charleston Oyster Farm during South Carolina's oyster season, cost between \$1 and \$1.50. That is reflected in the cost. Customers are charged \$2.75 for Blue Points, while the other three oyster options cost between \$3 and \$3.50.

By sourcing from regions along the eastern coast, Pell is able to showcase different levels of salinity and size.



**FOOD**

**Top 10 seafood restaurants in Charleston**

**BY PARKER MILNER [PMILNER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM](mailto:PMILNER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM)**