

Title Consumer acceptance of post harvest processed oysters  
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### **Abstract**

Post harvest processes of in-shell oysters have been developed to reduce the risk of *Vibrio* infections. Consumer awareness and acceptability of these products has not been determined. The primary objective of the consumer survey was to evaluate consumer acceptance of post harvest processed (PHP) oysters. Surveys were conducted at 3 sites in Mississippi and at the West Coast Seafood Show, Long Beach CA, 2002 and 2003. More than 500 volunteers were asked to sample PHP oysters on the half-shell. Mississippi oysters were collected and processed to eliminate *Vibrios* by 3 methods: Individually Quick Frozen (IQF), Hot Water Pasteurized (PSP) and Hydrostatic Pasteurized (PSP) and Hydrostatic Pressure Processed (HPP). Respondents were asked to rate the acceptability of the oysters on a scale of 1-10, 1 being poor and 10 being excellent. Respondents characteristics including sex, age, income, and educational attainment were also asked. Overall acceptability mean scores were similar for all 3 products, however, the IQF product scored slightly lower than the HPP and PST in flavor and overall acceptability. Mean scores for all 3 products were >7.0 and rated as good to very good. Personal demographics revealed that ethnic background, age and income had little significance on acceptability rating. However, highly educated panelists were more accepting of the processes and would change purchasing habits if the PHP oysters were available. Panelists were also asked if they would consume more raw oysters if the oysters were free of bacterial pathogens. More than 75% responded that "yes" they would purchase more with knowledge of increased safety. Consumer acceptance of post harvest processed oysters continues to be evaluated. Educating consumers about the safety and quality value of these oyster products will assist in meeting the objectives of the oyster industry and regulators to reduce the number of illnesses attributed to *Vibrio* bacteria in shellfish.