



## Counting Down My 33 Favorite Seafood Dishes: #1

Throughout Lent, the Recipe department is counting down what I think are the thirty-three best seafood dishes from the *New Orleans Menu* library of recipes. Enjoy!

### ***Drago's Char-Broiled Oysters***

Drago Cvitanovich has been the oyster king of New Orleans for four decades--and that's saying something. Like most other people in the oyster business, he was a Croatian immigrant. When he opened his restaurant in the 1970s, he kept his ties with his countrymen down the river, and as a result always had the best oysters available.

Drago's son Tommy, who now runs the restaurant, created this dish in the early 1990s. It became wildly popular, and restaurants all over town now copy the dish. It's simple enough. The only tough part is obtaining oysters of Drago's quality (sometimes you can get them directly from the restaurant), and then opening them. Don't attempt this without freshly-shucked oysters and an outdoor grill.

This is the perfect dish for those who want to enjoy oysters in their unadorned form, but can't or won't eat raw. Once you start eating these, you won't be able to stop. My personal best is four and a half dozen.

- *2 lb. butter, softened*
- *1/2 cup finely chopped fresh garlic*
- *1 Tbs. black pepper*
- *1 tsp. dried Italian seasoning*
- *6 dozen oysters on the half shell*
- *1 cup grated Parmesan and Romano cheeses, mixed*
- *3 Tbs. chopped parsley*

1. Mix butter with the garlic, pepper, and Italian seasoning.

2. Heat a gas or charcoal grill and put oysters on the half shell right over the hottest part. Spoon the seasoned butter over the oysters enough so that some of it will overflow into the fire and flame up a bit.

3. The oysters are ready when they puff up and get curly on the sides. Sprinkle the grated Parmesan and Romano and the parsley on top. Serve on the shells immediately with hot French bread.

*Serves eight to twelve normal people, or two serious oyster fanatics.*