

## ALL ABOUT

The term 'shellfish' encompasses a smorgasbord of scrumptious seafood: crustaceans such as prawns, crabs and rock lobsters; molluscs such as oysters and mussels; and cephalopods such as squid, cuttlefish and octopus. To pick the freshest shellfish, look for brightly coloured, lustrous shells and flesh that is firm and intact. Shells should be closed, or close when gently tapped and, as with all seafood, trust your nose – if they smell 'fishy', they're past their prime.

### OYSTERS (*Ostreinae* and *Crassostreinae*)

Jonathan Swift said: "He was a bold man who first ate an oyster," but these tasty bivalves are found almost worldwide and have been eaten for at least 30,000 years. Australia has three types of oysters: Sydney Rocks, the larger Pacifics, and the flat Natives (also known as Angasis). Generally, Rocks are best in the warmer months, and the others when it's cooler.

**Cook them at home:** Freshly shucked is the way to go, with nothing added bar a possible squeeze of lemon, or a dash of Tabasco. But, if you must, dust them in tapioca starch, flash-fry them and serve with wasabi mayo.

**Eat them at:** Pier Restaurant, 594 New South Head Rd, Rose Bay, 02 9327 6561 (freshly shucked)

### MUD CRAB (*Scylla serrata*)

Mud Crabs like to live on the muddy bottoms of shallow coastal mangroves in the warm waters of Queensland and the Northern Territory. Unlike their smaller cousins, Blue Swimmer and Spanner Crabs, there's plenty of sweet meat in their large front nippers.

**Cook it at home:** Buy them live and dispatch them humanely by popping them in the freezer for 30-40 minutes (until they become inactive) before dropping them into boiling water for eight minutes per 500g. Pick out the meat and toss through hot pasta with some garlic, preserved lemon and olive oil.

**Eat it at:** Harry's, 1st Floor, 198 Elizabeth St, Sydney, 02 9281 5565 (Singapore Chilli Crab)

### ROCK LOBSTER (*Palinuridae*)

Our local rock lobsters shouldn't be confused with the 'true' lobsters of the northern hemisphere, with their large front nippers. Still, the meat of our local boys is just as sweet, and they sure dress up a festive table.

**Cook it at home:** Buy them already cooked, split in half and serve with whole-egg mayo with a good dose of garlic, chopped herbs or horseradish stirred through. Don't recook cooked rock lobsters as the flesh becomes tough. If you want them hot, buy them live and prepare as for mud crabs (above).

**Eat it at:** Kam Fook, Level 6, Westfield Shopping Centre, Bondi Junction, 02 9368 9889 (live from the tank)

# know your shellfish

Hiding under a rock when it comes to shellfish? Roberta Muir, from Sydney Seafood School, pries out all the best-kept shellfish secrets.

**Text:** Roberta Muir



### PRAWNS (*Penaeidae*)

Found from Greenland to the tip of South America, prawns are one of the most versatile and widely available shellfish. They deteriorate quickly so premium Australian prawns are often snap-frozen at sea. If possible, avoid cheap frozen imports. The striped Black Tiger Prawns are mostly farmed, so are often available fresh.

**Cook them at home:** Peel and devein, leaving the tail on and toss in a hot wok with a little peanut oil, garlic, ginger, asparagus, green onions and sesame oil. Splash in some Chinese rice wine and soy sauce and serve with steamed rice.

**Eat them at:** Buon Ricordo, 108 Boundary St, Paddington, 02 9360 6729 (Gamberetti with chilli oil)

### BLUE MUSSELS (*Mytilus galloprovincialis*)

This wonderfully affordable bivalve is found all over the world and is one of the easiest to prepare. Avoid the New Zealand Green Mussels, which are par-cooked before being imported and turn rubbery if you recook them.

**Cook them at home:** Scrub and debeard mussels, fry some onion and garlic, add a splash of white wine and throw them in. Cover and shake gently for a minute or so, then pull out the shells as they open. Once they're all done, serve with the cooking juices and plenty of crusty bread for dunking.

**Eat them at:** Spice I Am, 88 Wentworth Ave, Surry Hills, 02 9280 0928 (Hoy Tod)

### SQUID (*Teuthida*)

There are about 500 species of squid worldwide, from 2.5cm to the largest invertebrate on Earth, the infamous Giant Squid, measuring up to 18m long. They're often sold as calamari, the Italian word for squid.

**Cook it at home:** All cephalopods need to be cooked very fast (at a high temperature) or very slow (at a low temperature); anything in between turns them tough. Toss cleaned squid quickly on a hot barbecue then into a dressing of lime juice, fish sauce, sweet chilli sauce and sesame oil and serve on a bed of mixed greens.

**Eat it at:** Chinta Ria, Level 2, The Roof Terrace, Cockle Bay, 02 9264 3211 (Satchmo's Squid)

### CUTTLEFISH (*Sepia apama*)

Cheaper than their cousins above, and just as tasty, these guys have an almost oval body with very narrow side fins.

Despite the common term 'squid ink' for the substance used to make black pasta and risotto, it's traditionally the ink of cuttlefish that's used.

**Cook it at home:** Dust strips of cleaned 'hood' in tapioca starch mixed with salt and chilli, drop into hot oil for a few seconds, drain and serve sprinkled with extra chilli-salt.

**Eat it at:** Icebergs Dining Room & Bar, 1 Notts Ave, Bondi Beach, 02 9365 9000 (Risotto Nero)

### OCTOPUS (*Octopus australia*)

These tasty fellows are found right around the Australian coast, from shallow tidal pools to great depths and they range in size from baby to monstrous. They're easy to clean and there's almost no waste, so avoid the pre-cleaned, frozen imports and buy them fresh!

**Cook it at home:** Split the head and remove the innards and the small 'beak' between the legs and head. Cut into bite-sized pieces, and cover with boiling water for 30-60 seconds. Drain and drop into a marinade of olive oil, red wine vinegar, garlic and oregano for 30 minutes before tossing quickly on the barbecue.

**Eat it at:** Otto, 8/6 Cowper Wharf Rd, Woolloomooloo, 02 9368 7488 (char-grilled).



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