

Fresh Shellfish, What To Look For

These tips are important when serving shellfish.

Fresh shellfish will make a special occasion of just about any ordinary meal. They're rich in protein and high in many essential nutrients. But before you buy shellfish, you want to make sure they're the best.

Important clues to look for...

When selecting good quality shellfish, make sure that oysters and clams in the shell are alive, and the shell is closed when handled.

Gaping shells mean that the shellfish is dead and should not be purchased.

Shucked oysters should be plump with a mild odor and a creamy color. The liquor should be clear and free from gas bubbles, indicating fermentation. There should be no sour odor.

There are many factors to consider when determining the freshness of shrimp, oysters, clams, crawfish, crabs and lobsters.



Color is important.

Check fresh shrimp for a fresh, mild odor and firm texture. The shells should be a greenish-gray to a brownish cast in color, depending on the kind of shrimp. A red orange color may indicate that the shrimp is decomposing. Cooked shrimp should have red color in the shells and the meat should have a reddish tinge.

These shellfish should be alive...

Live crawfish, crabs and lobsters should be active, free of mud and debris, with no unpleasant odor. Cooked crawfish and lobster tails should be curled, indicating that the shellfish were alive at the time of cooking.

For more information about what to look for when buying fresh shellfish; contact your local county Extension office.