

Razor Clams

Though the razor clam Siliqua patula is known to occur from the Okhotsk Sea to Pismo, California it is dug in commercial quantities only from the Aleutian Islands to Oregon. In the past decade 95 per cent or more of the commercial poundage in Oregon has been taken from the Clatsop county beaches between the Columbia River and Tillamook Head.

Prior to 1941 little is known about the annual landings of this species, though from 1913 to 1916, 1923 to 1929, and 1931 to 1936 razor clams were canned in varying quantities in Oregon. During the past war military restrictions on the beaches plus a decreased number of diggers resulted in very low landings. However, since the war this fishery has steadily increased in magnitude. Some of the older diggers feel that there are nearly as many clams now as there were in earlier years, though greatly intensified competition has reduced the number of pounds taken on a tide by any one digger. The razor clam at the present time also supports a heavy sport fishery which very nearly equals the commercial fishery in pounds taken per year.

Currently the greatest portion of the digging takes place during the spring and summer months, though there are some landings the year round. Production is divided among three markets; fresh, crab bait, and canned. It appears that the fresh market is the largest followed by crab bait and canned in that order. The winter production is sold primarily on the Portland fresh market while during the summer months the coast resort areas are the main consumers. Crab bait consumption seems directly related to the degree of success of the crab fishery during a given year. When these two markets fail to absorb the total production and prices fall, then canning is done on a limited scale. It appears that cheaper clams from Washington and Alaska tend to restrict the canning of Oregon clams to periods of low prices.

Special Clams

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