

GALICIAN MUSSELS

— THE KEY FACTS

- The clean waters around Galicia – an autonomous region in the north west of Spain – are ideal for mussel production, being rich in the natural plankton that give the shellfish their special flavour.
- The mussels are the Atlantic *mytilus galloprovincialis*. Those produced by Isle of Shuna in Scotland are the *mytilus edulis* type.
- The industry was established more than 50 years ago and has flourished, helped by strict controls on water quality. Galicia produces more fish and shellfish than any other part of Spain.
- The mussels are reared below large rafts moored in the many bays – or rias – along the coast. Traditional methods have been maintained for growing and harvesting the shellfish, helping to sustain their renowned quality and flavour.
- The organisation representing the mussel growers is OPMEGA (Organización de Productores Mejilloneros de Galicia), which has more than 750 members. This body has been recognised by the EU since 1986.
- Annual mussel production from the region is more than 280,000 tonnes from 3,200 rafts. This volume represents 96 per cent of Spanish production, 50 per cent of European production and 20 per cent of global production. This makes Galicia the world's second largest mussel farming area, after China.
- The industry directly employs around 9,000 people and supports an estimated 20,000 jobs in associated businesses.

Spanish delight

Isle of Shuna is saying bienvenidos to a new range of Spanish mussels this summer.

The company has secured an exclusive deal to import mussels from Galicia, an area renowned for producing shellfish of excellent quality.

The arrangement dovetails perfectly with existing Shetland operations, as the product is available during the closed season for Scottish mussels – May to September – strengthening the brand's year-round market presence.

Following a successful trial last summer, Isle of Shuna has developed a strong relationship with OPMEGA, the co-operative that represents shellfish producers in north west Spain, and will be promoting their produce more widely.

Under the Isle of Shuna and Demlane labels, the Spanish mussels will be available in 5kg nets boxed and iced in 20kg cases with a shelf life of 10 days.

The Galician mussels are a different type from the blue mussels reared in Shetland, but meet strict quality and taste criteria. Thanks to the warmer Atlantic waters around the Spanish coast, they grow faster and larger and can be harvested at 10 months.



They are no less tender than our Scottish products, though, and are perfect as the heart of a summer seafood platter or a paella, washed down with a crisp Galician white wine, such as an *Albariño*. Their strength of flavour means they are also well-suited to more robust sauces.

Isle of Shuna Managing Director John Brewer said: "In choosing to import mussels from Galicia we were painstaking in our selection, as we were determined that any new products should meet the high standards we have established. These are superb shellfish, ideal for the spring and summer market."

Health boost for mussel sales

Backtracking by health experts on the nutritional value of mussels has sparked a consumer boom.

A recent report in *The Sunday Telegraph* revealed that revised professional opinion on the cholesterol content of mussels has encouraged larger numbers of British families to add them to their weekly shopping list.

Figures quoted from independent retail analysts TNS show UK annual sales rising from 2,390 to around 3,000 tonnes last

year. It claims eight per cent of British households – around two million – now regularly buy mussels to cook at home.

Mussels no longer feature on NHS Direct's watchlist of high cholesterol foods and awareness has been raised of their low calorie content and high levels of omega-3, zinc and iron. For more information please go to www.isleofshuna.co.uk/health.

TECHNOLOGY TO THE FORE



Seen one of these before? We thought not. This unit is called a mouliarium – a new storage unit for live mussels. This particular model is made by Homarium NV, based in Pittem, near Brugge in Belgium (www.homarium.be). Haymans Fishmongers, found in Oxford's covered market, is the latest business to benefit from this technology (see *Your Business* on p4).

The principle is simple – by keeping mussels in a mouliarium they retain optimum freshness. This particular model can store up to 100kg and the mussels are kept constantly watered for freshness, at a constant temperature.

The water is filtered across a UV light so any impurities are instantly destroyed. Isle of Shuna strongly approves of anything that keeps our mussels in tip top condition for as long as possible.

The new site on Shetland



Grand design for Walls

Work is well under way on the most ambitious development yet of Isle of Shuna's production centre at Walls, on Shetland.

The company is building a 330m² extension to its premises that will provide a high-care facility, significantly increasing our capacity and taking advantage of greater opportunities in the market place.

The new unit will provide a controlled environment, packing and labelling of 'value-added' products, together with dedicated chiller and freezer stores. When it comes on stream at the end of June, volume of packed goods will increase from 1,000 to 10,000 per week. A number of new jobs will also be created in the local area.

And with all the facilities provided on-site, there is no need for the mussels to be freighted to the mainland for preparation and thus no compromise in their hallmark freshness, taste and quality.

"This development will be invaluable in helping us meet the demand for pre-packed products," said Rod Knutton, Isle of Shuna's Head of Technical Development. "This kind of demand is particularly strong in the UK, where so much shopping is done in the multiple supermarket chains, compared to the Continent where the preference remains for predominantly fresh products."



HONOURS FOR FOOD EXCELLENCE

ISLE OF SHUNA MUSSELS ARE IN THE RUNNING FOR A TOP AWARD. OUR LIGHTLY OAK SMOKED MUSSELS HAVE BEEN ENTERED FOR THE 2007 SCOTTISH FOOD AND DRINK EXCELLENCE AWARDS, A SCHEME WHICH HONOURS COMPANIES THAT LEAD THE WAY IN INNOVATION, ENTERPRISE AND QUALITY.

Judging addresses a wide range of issues, not just the quality of the products but also the way in which production takes into account environmental issues, marketing strategies and control procedures.

As a 100 per cent natural product, our mussels are steamed in their own juices, just hours after being harvested from the nearby waters. We'll keep you updated on our progress in the awards.

NEW FROZEN PRODUCT LAUNCHED

ISLE OF SHUNA IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE LAUNCH OF A NEW PRODUCT RANGE, DEMLANE FROZEN COOKED SHETLAND MUSSELS.

These are the first Scottish rope-grown mussels to be offered in this market sector and are an important new offering for the catering trade.

Guaranteed 100 per cent rope-farmed in Shetland, they are larger than the mainly Irish-sourced mussels that have dominated this part of the market. And of course they will deliver the excellent taste and quality the Demlane label stands for.

The mussels' journey from the growing rope to the finished pack takes just hours, not days, and all preparation is carried out on-site, with no shipping to distant processing plants.

Following the usual de-bysing and washing process, the mussels are weighed into 180-micron polypropylene bags and steam cooked at 95°C.

They are then cooled to 5°C in 90 minutes, before freezing to -18°C. Packing into cases completes the process, all within 24 hours of the shellfish being harvested.

Following successful prototype trials, the Demlane Frozen Cooked Shetland Mussels will be available from October this year in 1kg packs that can be stored for up to six months before use.



MUSSELS TO BRUSSELS

Sending mussels to Brussels may be the culinary equivalent of coals to Newcastle, but the great quality of Demlane mussels has earned them a place on the shelves of one of Belgium's top stores.

Isle of Shuna has successfully negotiated an arrangement with the Delhaize supermarket chain to carry its products, with help from the Food from Britain organisation.

It's an important first step into a market that's renowned for its huge mussel consumption and its highly discerning customers. For Isle of Shuna products even to have been considered by the Belgians is a mark of their fundamental excellent quality.

The arrangement is all the more important to the development of the business, as it

marks the first direct link to a supermarket, with all the demands of quality and supply that entails.

Delhaize began stocking Isle of Shuna 1kg trays of fresh mussels in April for a trial period, with the potential of agreeing an on-going supply in the future.

"This is a major step forward for us," said John Brewer, Isle of Shuna Managing Director, "it shows that our product has the depth of quality that's right for a very sophisticated Continental market."

Did you know?

THE EIDER DUCK MAY BE BEST KNOWN FOR GIVING UP ITS FEATHERS FOR COSY EIDERDOWNS, BUT THE BIRD IS NOT SO POPULAR WHEN IT COMES TO OUR MUSSEL HARVESTERS.

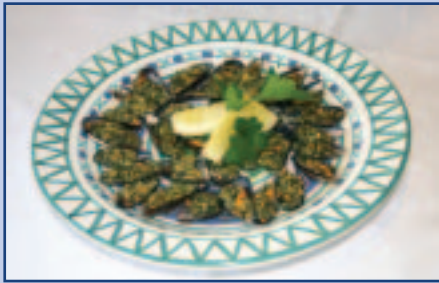
In early spring, the ducks like nothing more than a shellfish feast and our rope-grown mussels have all the appeal of a delicious serve-yourself buffet. The thinner shells of the farmed mussels make them easier to tackle than the wild variety.

That leaves our boat crews with the task of keeping the birds at bay, without causing them harm or distress: the eider – known in Shetland as the 'dunter' – is a protected species. It's a time-consuming and frustrating job – sadly ducks can't read warning signs.

If you have any ideas on ways to keep the mussels safe from prying bills, we'd love to hear them!

GET YOUR CLICKS

Have you visited our new website yet? Click on to www.isleofshuna.co.uk and you'll find lots of news and information about our business, our brands and our customers, as well as online versions of our newsletter. Tasty recipes, health facts and contact details are all provided in a clear and easy-to-navigate format, illustrated with some wonderful images of our Scottish home, our produce and the local wildlife.



SPANISH MUSSELS WITH HERB, GARLIC & PARMESAN BUTTER

Serves 2 as a tasty appetiser or 5/6 as part of a tapas meal.

INGREDIENTS

600g fresh Galician mussels
2 bay leaves & 30ml of white wine
30g white breadcrumbs
60g unsalted butter
3 crushed garlic cloves
60g grated parmesan cheese
3 tbsp of finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
2 tbsp of finely chopped fresh chives
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Lemon wedges & a sprig of parsley to garnish

METHOD

Mix together the parsley, chives, parmesan and garlic in a medium sized bowl. Melt the butter and add to the bowl, mixing thoroughly. Season to taste and refrigerate for 30 minutes so the mixture sets slightly.

Clean and prepare the mussels (if you are unsure how to do this, log on to www.isleofshuna.co.uk/mussels/spcm). Place in a large pan with the wine and bay leaves, cover and cook over a high heat, shaking the pan occasionally, for five minutes or until the mussels open. Drain and leave to cool.

Shell the mussels, re-assemble into one half of the shells and arrange on an ovenproof plate. Fill each half-shell with a generous pinch of the herb butter, covering the mussels and pushing the mix down into the shells. Place in the centre of a hot oven (230°C/Gas Mark 8) for 10 minutes, moving to the top shelf for two to three minutes to crisp and brown slightly. Serve hot with the lemon wedges and parsley garnish.

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YOUR BUSINESS

Haymans Fisheries

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There has been a market in Oxford since the late ninth century and the famous covered market can trace its roots back to 1772.

Haymans Fisheries was founded in 1927 and still occupies the original corner plot where it all began, although it has tripled its retail space over the years and is now the market's only fishmonger.

Isle of Shuna News caught up with Geraint Jones, Retail Manager, at the start of another busy day's trading.

"It's a long day in our trade. We are setting up and taking deliveries from 7am and although technically we are open from 9 to 5, we never turn early birds away. We are very committed to customer service – our customers are very knowledgeable but they do like us to help them with recommendations and suggestions.

"We will always try and source their special requests and they know that we carefully hand pick suppliers with a reputation for outstanding quality," Geraint explains. "That's why we have just started stocking New Forest farmed Barramundi and why we switched to Isle of Shuna for our mussels and smoked mussels. We are



A brisk trade in the covered market

selling 150kg of fresh mussels a week and our customers really love them. We have one customer who drives from London especially to buy our mussels!"

Haymans' passion for quality produce and customer service has certainly been noticed. The team recently returned from the Seafood Awards Annual Dinner where they were among the top three finalists in the Independent Retailer of the Year category.

Their passion means they have a thriving wholesale business too, supplying around 25 local restaurants and most of the Oxford University colleges. Haymans has supplied fish and shellfish for the 'high table' when colleges have entertained the Queen, the Prime Minister and many other important dignitaries.



Geraint Jones (centre) and two of Haymans finest fishmongers

"We are investing in our business all the time," explains Geraint. "We have just, for example, taken delivery of new lobster tanks and have purchased one of the first moulariums in the UK. So we've got somewhere to put our mussels."

We left with 600g of our own mussels from the moularium and four very nice salmon fillets for tea!

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