

What noise annoys an oyster lover most?

Out of stock or season closed, that's what! However, that is not a message you will likely hear on the Matakana Coast. The Mahurangi Harbour is home to eight commercial oyster growers, four of whom offer oysters direct to customers in the Matakana Coast region. The local growers all participate in a monitoring scheme for the harbor to ensure the pristine quality of the waters, and that is one of the reasons that Mahurangi Harbour oysters are so highly regarded, both in New Zealand and abroad.

As always with oysters, the closer you are to the source, the better they'll be. One of the reasons I enjoy living here is because I LOVE oysters and I'll happily knock off two dozen of the finest, washed down with locally-produced craft beer – heaven! So here are a few ways you can enjoy the freshest, tastiest, most succulent oysters you could hope for.

#### Orata Marine Ltd

Every Saturday, for nearly ten years now, Lynette Dunn and Trevor Smith have sold their oysters at the Matakana Farmers' Market. Rain or shine, they are there to feed the insatiable desire for fresh, local oysters. Orata supplies markets and restaurants all over Auckland, and beyond, so it's not hard to find their gorgeous oysters, but the Matakana Farmers' Market is the best place to get them fresh from the farm that day. Lynette says that concentrating on maintaining top-quality, good-sized oysters is what has kept their business thriving and ensured regulars return time and time again. The Farmers' Market has been great for promoting their own business but Lynette says that the added benefit is promotion of the Mahurangi Harbour as a whole, and that is good for all the growers.

#### Mahurangi Oysters Ltd

Whether you buy a bag of fresh-that-morning oysters from the chiller outside their Oyster Shed, sample them in the classy surrounds of The Depot in Auckland City, or take the Shuckle Ferry oyster farm tour on the beautiful Mahurangi Harbour itself, Andrew and Lisa Hay's carefully tended and mouth-watering oysters will delight you. Their small, family-run business concentrates on producing top quality oysters that get eaten locally and around the country. The latest addition to the business is the Shuckle Ferry, a custom-fitted barge that will take you to their oyster farm where you can harvest, shuck and eat delicious Mahurangi Oysters. Leaving from Scotts Landing, this is a unique chance to experience the crisp sea air, see where the oysters grow and find out a little about an oyster's life. You just don't get any closer to the source than this. Oh, and did we mention that you get to eat lots of scrumptious oysters? Check out [www.mahurangiosters.co.nz](http://www.mahurangiosters.co.nz)

#### Biomarine Ltd

Matakana Coast is also home to Biomarine Ltd, one of the largest oyster producers in New Zealand. They produce around five million oysters annually, 90% of which are exported. Most of the oysters are captured as juveniles in the Mahurangi Harbour and then grown to maturity at their farm in the Kaipara Harbour. Biomarine have recently opened a new factory for processing their oysters in Warkworth and customers can purchase fresh and frozen oysters from the office at 482 Woodcocks Road.

That's less than half of the growers working in the Mahurangi Harbour, the remainder of whom supply restaurants, wholesalers and markets throughout the country and overseas; you never need be short of a Mahurangi oyster. However, you can't beat the opportunity to sample fresh oysters, straight from the ocean that morning so get along to the suppliers mentioned above and find out why Mahurangi Harbour oysters are so revered.