CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE of Cooked and Raw Clams

Sunray venus clams represent an interesting addition to the complement of molluscan shellfish available through commercial culturists and wild harvesters in Florida. Sunray venus clams can be grown in similar environmental conditions and using similar culture techniques as for hard clams. The commercial availability of sunray venus clams will likely enhance the viability of the cultured molluscan shellfish grower and wholesale industries, which have recently been shown to be providing an annual economic impact to the Florida economy of $52 million.

Recent studies have evaluated the consumer acceptance of both cooked and raw sunray venus clams in local Florida markets. The studies provide an assessment of consumers’ opinion of sunray venus clams with respect to a number of product attributes. Overall, the studies found that consumer rate sunray venus clams very highly as a food product, with a strong willingness to both order the product again and recommend the product to others.

Cooked Product Assessment

Sunray venus clams were served in a typical restaurant setting, either as an appetizer or an entrée. Most clams were served steamed, baked or broiled.

- A total of 5,900 cultured sunray venus clams were delivered to four restaurants in the north Florida region.
- Average shell length per clam was 53-65 mm (2.1-2.6”) and average total weight per clam was 23-37 g (12-20 clams/lb).

Within participating restaurants, 239 patrons tried sunray venus clams and completed surveys.
- Most respondents were only slightly hesitant to try cooked sunray venus clams.
- Cooked product was rated very highly on the basis of appearance, taste, and texture, with 90% of the respondents indicating a rating of Excellent or Very Good.
- Only 11% of the respondents detected any grittiness in the clams.
- For all respondents, 94% were willing to order the product again, and 97% were willing to recommend the product.
This component of an integrated research and extension project evaluating consumer acceptance of the sunray venus clam was conducted by Chuck Adams at the University of Florida, Food and Resource Economics Department and Leslie Sturmer at the University of Florida, Cooperative Extension Service with funding from the Florida Sea Grant College Program.