



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.



Head Chef Peter Stefani of Cedar Key's Island Room Restaurant displays one method of preparing clams as appetizers.

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).

ALSO IN THIS SERIES

- ▶ Aquaculture Production Potential
- ▶ Sensory Profile
- ▶ Shelf Life Assessment
- ▶ Nutritional Profile

- ▶ 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.

Product Attribute Ratings of Cooked Sunray Venus Clams for the Respondents

	Excellent	Very Good	Good, Fair, or Poor
% of all respondents for each attribute			
Appearance	84	13	3
Taste	72	18	10
Texture	63	25	12
Tenderness	58	25	17
Value	61	24	15
Overall	70	20	10

Raw Product Assessment

Sunray venus clams were served in sushi restaurant settings, either as an appetizer or an entrée. Most clams were served raw in the traditional sushi or sashimi manner, but other preparation styles included seiche and on the half-shell.

- ▶ A total of 1,200 cultured sunray venus were delivered to four sushi restaurants in the north Florida region.
- ▶ Average shell length per clam was 66-68 mm (2.6") and average total weight per clam was 40-44 g (10-11 clams /lb).

- ▶ Within participating restaurants, 101 patrons tried sunray venus clams and completed surveys.
- ▶ Most respondents were only slightly hesitant to try raw sunray venus clams.
- ▶ Only 19% of the respondents detected any grittiness in the clams.
- ▶ The overall rating for raw product was slightly lower than cooked product, with 76% of the respondents indicating a rating of Excellent or Very Good.
- ▶ For all respondents, 83% were willing to order the product again and 91%

were willing to recommend the product. The acceptance rate was lower in traditional Asian sushi restaurants: 63% willing to order again and 64% willing to recommend.

Summary

The overall assessment of sunray venus clams by survey respondents was extremely favorable for both cooked and raw product. Overall, a strong willingness to order cooked or raw sunray venus clams again was found.

Product Attribute Ratings of Raw Sunray Venus Clams for the Respondents

	Excellent	Very Good	Good, Fair, or Poor
% of all respondents for each attribute			
Appearance	60	24	16
Taste	44	31	25
Texture	45	25	30
Tenderness	43	32	25
Value	53	20	27
Color	56	24	20
Size	40	29	31
Overall	43	33	24
<i>Non-Asian consumers</i>	51	30	19
<i>Asian consumers</i>	32	27	32



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.