

# Salat – SHELLFISH



Kodiak's shores are covered with a wealth of shellfish. Large quantities of clams, cockles, whelks, mussels, sea urchins, chitons, limpets, and periwinkles are widely available. Alutiiq/Sugpiaq people harvest these resources throughout the year. Shellfish are an accessible, abundant food that can be collected by anyone. A digging stick, a bucket, and a leisurely walk on the beach are the only harvesting requirements. Historically, shellfish were an important early spring food. At this time of year, food stores are often exhausted, many wild foods are not available, and very low tides expose Kodiak's coast. According to Alutiiq Elders, "when the tide is out, the table is set."

The widespread presence of shells in archaeological sites illustrates the popularity of shellfish. Archaeologists find huge quantities of shell in garbage piles dating to the past 2,500 years. They indicate that people harvested and consumed many thousands of shellfish. Shells have even been found in village sites far from the ocean. On the shores of Karluk Lake, archaeologists find sites with shells, demonstrating that people carried clams and mussels into the interior.

In addition to food, shells provided Alutiiq ancestors with material for making beads and pendants, creating decorative inlays, and crafting utensils. You can lash a wooden handle to a clam shell to make a spoon or sharpen a mussel shell into a knife.



*Top: Christina Lukin cleaning clams, Afognak Village, ca. 1960. Photo by Robert Chadwick, Chadwick Collection, AM528:C1-43. Bottom: Clams in a skiff, Onzinkie, 1946, McFayden Collection. AM529:22.*

## Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP)

Today, eating personally harvested shellfish carries serious risks. Filter feeders like clams and mussels consume organisms in the water. This can include deadly poisonous algae, also known as the red tide. The algae can be present at any time of year, and there is no way to reduce its toxic effects by cleaning, cooking, or freezing shellfish. Be safe. Do not collect shellfish from untested Alaska beaches.

### LEARN MORE:

Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning, Alaska Division of Environmental Health, Food Safety and Sanitation Program, <https://dec.alaska.gov/eh/fss/shellfish/paralytic-shellfish-poisoning/>