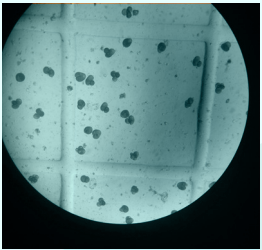


THE LIFE OF A MARICULTURED OYSTER

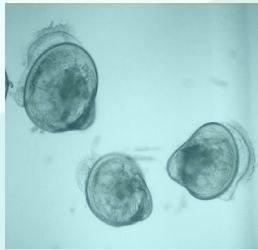
DAY 1

Broodstock oysters spawn in separate containers in hatchery building; Sperm and eggs carefully combined to maximize fertilization; Microscope used to determine rate of fertilization of eggs.



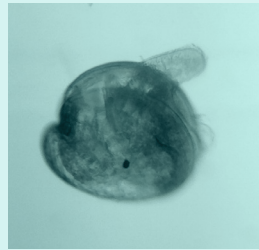
DAYS 2-14

Larvae grow in controlled environment; Water strained through a sieve every two days to allow check on growth and health of larvae; A central dot, or eye, and sticky foot develop on larvae.



DAYS 15-21

Eyed larvae placed in container with fine dusting of shell particles, called microcultch; Larvae attach via sticky foot to individual particles, creating single oysters; Shell production speeds up.



DAYS 22-60

Seed oysters moved to outside silos; Nutrient-rich creek water fuels growth to the 8-10 millimeter size suitable for planting in the wild; Farmers visit hatchery to pick up several thousands of seeds in each order.



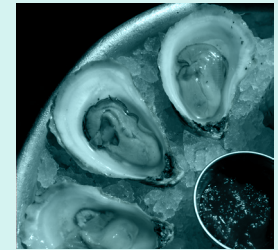
MONTHS 3-18

Single oysters grow in mesh bags in floating cages in tidal creeks; Farmers remove bags routinely to control biofouling and re-sort by size; Oyster shells reach 3 inches long, an ideal size for restaurants.



FINAL DAYS

Oyster shells cleaned and trucked to restaurants within 24 hours and stored in restaurant coolers at around 40 degrees; Small batches displayed in raw bar and ordered by the dozen by diners.



Seed oyster image by Chris Katalinas, National Sea Grant College Program

