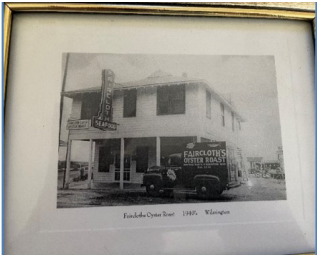


Oyster Roast Memories

Written and submitted by Marie Ashworth



I was born on October 17, 1939 in James Walker Memorial Hospital. We lived on Wrightsville Sound (which now has lost its identity). Our house was 500 feet from the road across from the Wrightsville Esso station that burned and in its place was built the Wrightsville Gulf Terminal, now Dockside Restaurant. Located next to the inland waterway bridge was Faircloth's Oyster Roast.

My mother and I would always order a combination seafood platter, but my father ordered a bucket of oysters. The restaurant employed teenage boys to shucks them. This was my first encounter with roasted oyster.

Then my sister, Lib, married Tancil, whose family owned a cottage off Edgewater Club Rd. There actually was an Edgewater Club owned by Tidewater Power and Light. This was where I was introduced to a true oyster roast. The cottage was situated on the inland waterway. Tancil would go in the sound and return with a bushel basket loaded to the brim with oysters. He would spread them out on the ground and hose them down to remove the mud clinging to them. Then he placed them on the large piece of metal that was located over the fire on an oyster roast. This was what appeared to be a brick chimney with an extended fire pit over which the metal was placed. Then the oysters were covered with wet "tow" or better known today as burlap sacks. The fire underneath was kept burning with wood gathered from dead trees nearby.

Meanwhile my sister Lib was busy in the kitchen making cracklin' cornbread. This was done using what my mother called a black spider (don't ask me why) frying pan. Today they are just called cast iron. Lib had a hard time at first keeping up with our father eating as fast as she could fry them. Then when he had eaten his fill, she could finally finish cooking for the feast to come. On the side porch, we had sawhorses with a large piece of plywood over them. Tancil would bring the oysters in and spread them over the plywood. We all had bowls that we filled with oysters that we shucked ourselves with oyster knives. I liked to fill my bowl and then pour hot melted butter over them. Then I would drizzle some ketchup down one side of the bowl for dipping. Everybody had their own way of preparing them for eating. Tancil liked hot pepper vinegar. By now my father had always switched to crackers. Dessert was my mother's made from scratch lemon meringue (at least 4 inches high) pie. She would say when you eat seafood, dessert must always be lemon.

But now because of pollution, those days have long been over. I remember with horror the first time I really knew how horribly polluted the sound was when I saw at least a quarter mile of silt spreading over the water caused by the careless clearing for a golf course at Porters Neck. No longer can we catch crabs and dig for clams as we did in the old days. At age 82 with most of my life behind me, I am so glad I lived when I did.

