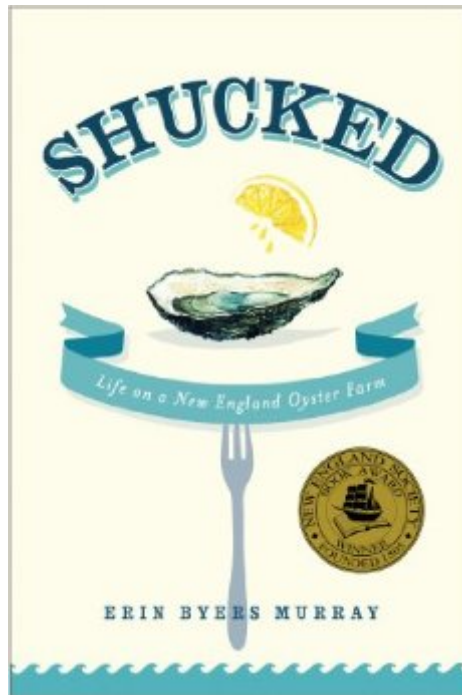


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# Shucked: Life On A New England Oyster Farm



## Synopsis

Bill Buford's *Heat* meets Phoebe Damrosch's *Service Included* in this unique blend of personal narrative, food miscellany, and history. In March of 2009, Erin Byers Murray ditched her pampered city girl lifestyle and convinced the rowdy and mostly male crew at Island Creek Oysters in Duxbury, Massachusetts, to let a completely unprepared, aquaculture-illiterate food and lifestyle writer work for them for 12 months to learn the business of oysters. *SHUCKED* is part love letter, part memoir and part documentary about the world's most beloved bivalves. An in-depth look at the work that goes into getting oysters from farm to table, *SHUCKED* shows Erin's full-circle journey through the modern day oyster farming process and tells a dynamic story about the people who grow our food, and the cutting-edge community of weathered New England oyster farmers who are defying convention and looking ahead. The narrative also interweaves Erin's personal story—the tale of how a technology-obsessed workaholic learns to slow life down a little bit and starts to enjoy getting her hands dirty (and cold). This is a book for oyster lovers everywhere, but also a great read for locavores and foodies in general.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book begins with what it says it is going cover, a woman decides to chuck her fairly shallow (by her own account) life as an entertainment blogger where she basically tells hipsters what to like and where to go, with little critical assessment needed, and instead see what it takes to work on an oyster farm on the Mass coast for a year. Her account is fun, realistic of the work involved and interesting. And though she is not an oyster expert, some good information comes through in a way

that is engaging. I have given it three stars to reflect that for a little over half of the book it is definitely worth a read. And I would recommend it even if you are planning to just read the first half. But only three stars here is for a reason. About 2/3s way through she basically reverts to writing about all her encounters with the "fabulous" elite of celebrity chefs and restauranteurs. At this point she simply gushes over her subjects and her being included in whatever scene she is lucky enough to be part of. We get to read breathless lines like: "...a very special appearance from super chef Daniel Boulud, who, during one of his swings through the party, jumped behind the raw bar to shuck oysters with us....Boulud was a party animal whose presence ... turned the crowd from vaguely entertained to hog wild." or "By now I was fully enamored of his style of cooking; by opening a Latin-inspired restaurant he'd completely stolen my heart." I mean, really? At that point it will occur to you that perhaps you have picked up a different book for your read on the train to work; what happened to the book about working on an oyster farm? How did we get back to this pampered woman, when she was beginning to show such promise as a serious person? I can't answer that, but I hope she can really learn to stop writing as if she is on the staff of Boston Magazine. There is potential there.

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to quit your "stable" yet "boring" career and set off into uncharted waters? Do you long for a life lived simply, purely, and without regrets? Have you ever wished you would have the chance to work with people who loved what they do... but more importantly WHY they do it? Do you want to be happy? If any of these questions resonate with you, buy this book. Forget that, buy two copies and give one to your significant other. A master of artistic prose, Murray takes the reader on an incredible ride through the lives of many souls willing to shuck the stable for the great unknown. This will go down as the most important book you've read in the last 12 months. REMEMBER, the only difference between you today and you 12 months from now will be 3 things: (1) the places you go, (2) the people you meet, and (3) the books you read. Read this book.

A great read by a credible writer who spent 18 months working as a farmer at Island Creek Oysters. Her witty and engaging commentary, coupled with her culinary background, makes this an interesting, fun and informative book. Can't wait to try the recipes at the end of each chapter!

Early on in Erin Byers Murray's *Shucked*, her eminently readable account of the 18 months she spent getting her hands dirty at a Massachusetts oyster farm, she contends that oysters are best

served naked with just a little bit of lemon. You might say the same about Murray's writing style, which is as raw as a bivalve on the half shell, with just enough tartness to keep it from becoming overly deep or self-absorbed. I expected to learn a lot about what it takes to get an oyster from tide to plate, and I wasn't disappointed--Murray's funny and thoroughly unglamorous view of the mucky tides and chilly days out on the oyster float have given me a whole new appreciation for just how much work goes into that satisfying slurp. What I didn't expect was how personal this book would be--the author opens up about her own difficulties and triumphs adjusting to life exposed to the elements, her conflicts and confederacies with the rowdy mostly-male crew of the oyster growers, and the strain her new life put on her marriage with disarming honesty and humor, making the reader ask him or herself what s/he'd do to follow a crazy dream in order to concoct a new definition of happiness. My one criticism is that there wasn't enough about the history and lore of oysters (I could be wrong, but I don't think the word "aphrodisiac" is even mentioned!) Towards the end, Murray writes about an oyster primer she made for the staff of the new Island Creek Oyster Bar the company opened, and I found myself wishing she'd included part of it in the book itself. Maybe it could be an appendix in the paperback! But bottom line: if you care about oysters, or just about stories of personal transformation, you'll find yourself flying through the pages of this book. And maybe even wishing you could throw on some waders and join the harvest on the next low tide.

What a great first effort for the author. Island Creek is one of my favorite oyster bars. This is a quick and easy read for people that have little interest in oysters. If you have some interest, this is a must read. This book takes you literally from spat to table. I loved it, and I even went and planted oysters on my property on the Chesapeake. If you live where you can plant oysters, go clean up your bay or river and get back a culinary treasure. Skip through the parts where the author whines about her situation and enjoy a great story about some great watermen.

This was recommended by my cousin. Bought it because I respect her book opinions. It was an autobiographical view of a point in time- interesting from a non-shucker (but oyster appreciator) viewpoint. I kept wishing it had more of the author's soul in the book. I enjoyed her firsthand experiences but it was a little too timeliney and dry for me. Not a book that you would read twice. The girl does have grit, though.

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