

**VIRGINIA
IS FOR
OYSTER
LOVERS™**

BRAND DIRECTION OVERVIEW

The best food tells a story of the place it is from. Eating an oyster in Virginia captures the character of our waters in one quick, complex taste. The Virginia oyster tells visitors a story in every shell. This is why Virginia is for Oyster Lovers.

Growing in the world-famous Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, Virginia oysters thrive in eight different regions. Oysters taste best waterside in Virginia, but this internationally distributed delicacy delivers notes of bay breezes, salt water, sunshine and dockside views no matter where they're enjoyed.

Travelers can eat oysters like a true Virginian year-round, thanks to numerous festivals and events, like traditional Chesapeake Bay oyster roasts. Marquee Virginia oyster events include the Urbanna Oyster Festival, the Chincoteague Island Oyster Roast, The Merroir and Terroir Oyster Roast and more, even at wineries and breweries.

Learn more about these Virginia travel pearls at [Virginia.org/Oysters](https://www.virginia.org/Oysters)



MAKE SURE YOUR BUSINESSES AND DESTINATIONS ARE LISTED ON VIRGINIA.ORG

Encourage local outfitters, retailers, lodging, parks, etc. to list themselves for FREE on Virginia.org so we can link to them in our content. Share info about your best trails for hiking and biking and tell us where to find your trailheads and water access points. Take time to include great imagery!

For more information on getting listed on Virginia.org go to:

<http://www.vatc.org/emarketing/getstarted/>

Already have an account login and make updates or add new content at

<http://admin.virginia.org>

Contact Robin Mamunes at rmamunes@virginia.org.

SHARE THE LOVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Share Virginia is for Lovers oyster content on your pages

- Share VTC's content featuring your locality on your social platforms to extend the reach.
- Amplify the message by boosting Facebook posts and targeting key markets.
- #VAOysters, #LOVEVA, Virginia.org/Oysters

ALIGN YOUR CONTENT STRATEGY WITH OURS

Check out the upcoming Virginia is for Lovers content topics at

<http://www.vatc.org/emarketing/contentmarketing/>

In addition, consider submitting a foodie getaway for possible inclusion on the Virginia.org website. Information and link to the online getaway submission form can be found at <http://www.vatc.org/emarketing/getaways/>

Would you like to submit an idea for our travel blog or fun social media promotion?

Contact Dave Neudeck at dneudeck@virginia.org

SHARE COMPELLING IMAGERY AND VIDEO WITH US

Images and video drive social media engagement. It is vital for VTC to be equipped with the best resources available in order to drive maximum traffic and consumer engagement. Images and video should be inspiring and tell a visual story. They can be shots of oysters, watermen, oyster farms, chefs, dishes, festivals, and more. Think about creating content that would make people think (and feel), "I want to go there and do that."

For more info, please visit: [Planning Your Photo & Video Needs](#)

Contact: Sarah Hauser at shauser@virginia.org









USING OUR LOGOS

Be part of the Virginia is for Oyster Lovers campaign by using these logos on your website, social media platforms, and blogs. Share these resources with your local businesses.

If you would like to request the Virginia is for Oyster Lovers logo suite and usage rights, please fill out the graphics request form available here:

<http://www.vatc.org/tourism/vifl-logo-request/>

Contact: Ali Zaman at azaman@virginia.org



Share Virginia is for Oyster Lovers story ideas and sample itineraries with the VTC Communications team for pitching media visits. Take advantage of the following resources and distribute your own Virginia is for Oyster Lovers news to local media.

TALKING POINTS: VIRGINIA’S OYSTER SCENE AT A GLANCE

Today the East Coast – tomorrow the world! In 2014 Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe proclaimed Virginia as the Oyster Capital of the East Coast. The governor isn’t stopping there and he’s got plenty of ammunition behind him because Virginia is turning out some of the tastiest oysters on the planet. How can you experience it all for yourself? It’s easy: just follow the [Virginia Oyster Trail](#).

All along the shores of the Chesapeake Bay and along the Atlantic tidal regions talented and committed oyster purveyors are using hands-on methods to not only grow and nurture Virginia’s oyster population but to bring visitors face-to-shell with oysters in their native waters. At Rappahannock River Oyster Company, sit outside at their famed restaurant Merroir and watch the oysters come in from the boats. At your table trays of oysters from each of Virginia’s eight different oyster regions are presented, enabling you to taste the difference in oysters from the Atlantic and from river mouths feeding the Chesapeake.

Pleasure House Oysters of Virginia Beach will take you to their oyster beds in Lynnhaven Inlet and set up a table for you in shin-deep water. From there oysters are brought right up out of the water, opened and placed on the table and paired with Virginia wine. Unless you are an octopus there is not a way to eat a fresher oyster.

Want to really get your hands wet and do it yourself? The Tides Inn of Irvington will send you out in a boat with local watermen who will help you harvest oysters right out of the beds.



TALKING POINTS

- **Virginia has EIGHT different oyster regions producing oysters with distinct flavors, offering an oyster for every palate.** The flavor of “The Virginia Oyster” from each region is unique, unlike any others in the world (a concept called “merroir,” similar to the wine concept “terroir”). These exceptional tastes range in salinity, creaminess, and sweetness.
- **The Virginia Oyster is healthy!** Oysters contain Omega-3 fatty acids such as DHA and EPA which can contribute to a healthy heart. Oysters are also rich in minerals, such as iron, and low in calories.
- **All oysters are eco-friendly and actively filter the water they are grown in.** The oyster industry is one of the few industries that as it expands, provides tangible, increased environmental benefits. Our crops continually filter the waters of the Chesapeake Bay, removing excess nutrients that provide habitat for other species. The more we eat, the more we can grow. The more we can grow, the cleaner our water!
- **The Virginia Oyster industry is one of the longest-standing industries in the state,** going back to the time of the Jamestown settlers.
- **The “R-month” maxim is no longer true.** Oysters can now be enjoyed year-round thanks to advanced aquaculture techniques and refrigerated transportation. Additionally, with new state regulations in place for time and temperature regulations, monitoring ensures oysters are safe to eat year-round.
- **The Virginia Oyster has international recognition.** It is being served in restaurants and retailers up and down the east coast, across the U.S. and internationally. It is a delicious delicacy, in demand, from shack to chef; water to table.
- **The Virginia Oyster pairs perfectly with another recognized Virginia product: Wine!** Some of our oyster regions share watersheds with Virginia wineries, proving the point that “what grows together, goes together.” Virginia is for Oyster Lovers has a romantic connotation and oysters are associated with high-end products and experiences.



TALKING POINTS

- **Virginia has numerous, year-round festivals celebrating The Virginia Oyster.** Visit [Virginia.org/Oysters](https://www.virginia.org/Oysters) for the latest events, like the Urbanna Oyster Festival, Merroir & Terroir Oyster Roast, the Chincoteague Island Oyster Roast, the Oyster Roast at Cardinal Point Winery and more.
- **Virginia has developed “The Virginia Oyster Trail,”** that connects producers/purveyors with seafood restaurants and raw bars in Virginia’s distinctive bay and river towns for the ultimate oyster tourism experience.
- **The stories of The Virginia Oyster and the Chesapeake Bay’s rivers and watermen’s culture in Virginia are unique in the world.** These depictions offer personalized understandings into a way of life, which through generations has shaped the people and communities of the region, and connect with today’s visitor.
- **The Chesapeake Bay is a unique destination in the world.** It helps create more than 10,000 miles of Virginia Shoreline
- **Travelers can experience the state with taste** by pairing The Virginia Oyster with wine, craft beer, cider and spirits created here in Virginia.
- **New businesses are popping up along the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean offering visitor’s a chance to experience Virginia on the water with a fresh oyster catch.** Virginia offers everything from oyster kayak tours to fine dining seafood restaurants. More are opening every day where locals share with visitors their LOVE of The Virginia Oyster.
- **The deadrise workboat is the working boat of the Chesapeake Bay watermen, and is the official state boat of Virginia.** Oyster tours on deadrise workboats help waterman diversify their businesses and continue their traditional lifestyle on the water.



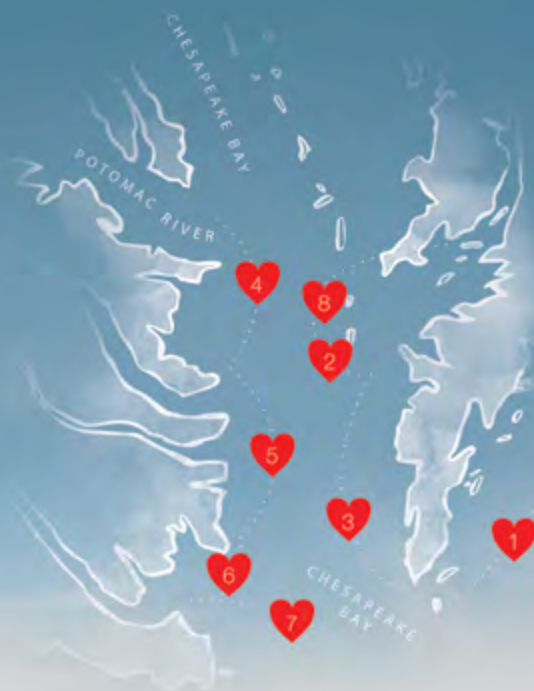
VIRGINIA'S OYSTER REGIONS

WESTERN SHORE

- 4. UPPER BAY WESTERN SHORE
- 5. MIDDLE BAY WESTERN SHORE
- 6. LOWER BAY WESTERN SHORE
- 7. TIDEWATER

EASTERN SHORE

- 8. TANGIER/MIDDLE CHESAPEAKE BAY
- 2. UPPER BAY EASTERN SHORE
- 3. LOWER BAY EASTERN SHORE
- 1. SEASIDE



VIRGINIA IS FOR
OYSTER LOVERS

8 OYSTER REGIONS, EIGHT DISTINCTIVE FLAVORS

Use this regional flavor guide to choose just the right oyster for your personal taste!

The table below expresses the salinity of the growing region, as well as providing a scale rating for saltiness, sweetness, and buttery/creaminess.

Region	Salinity Range	Saltiness	Buttery/Creamy	Sweetness	Comments
#1 Seaside	28-32	9	3	3	Initial bold saltiness mellowing into a taste of sweet butter/cream at the finish.
#2 Upper Bay Eastern Shore	16-18	5	1	3	Classic Virginia bay oyster flavor with balanced salt and sweet with a savory finish.
#3 Lower Bay Eastern Shore	18-22	7	3	3	Salty and Creamy with mellow sweetness and a quick finish.
#4 Upper Bay Western Shore	10-17	5	2	2	Sweetwater oyster with a light cream taste.
#5 Middle Bay Western Shore	16-18	5	3	3	Lightly salty with easily distinguished cream or butter and a pleasant slight minerality.
#6 Lower Bay Western Shore	16-18	5	2	2	Mild saltiness moving to a sweet finish.
#7 Tidewater	16-30	8	2	2	Salty oyster with a sweetness and a smooth finish.
#8 Tangier/Middle Chesapeake Bay	16-18	5	5	4	Traditional Virginia Bay Oyster flavor with a balance of salt and sweet, and a savory butter/cream finish.

Source: VirginiaOysters.org

1-2: Barely Perceptible , 3-4: Slightly, 5-6: Moderate, 7-8: Very Noticeable, 9: Strong

FURTHER BACKGROUND

- [Esquire Magazine](#) proclaimed Virginia as the “Food Region of 2014” and a big reason for that is oysters.
- **During the 2014 season, Virginia’s oyster harvest jumped another 31%, surging past 658,000 bushels, with a dockside value of more than \$33.8 million, the most in nearly a generation.**

In 2014 Governor McAuliffe proclaimed Virginia as the “Oyster Capital of the East Coast”

- November is Oyster Month in Virginia
- Virginia’s oyster population is thriving and experiencing a Renaissance
- Virginia is the largest producer of fresh, farm-raised oysters on the East Coast
- In 2014 Virginia’s oyster harvest surged to more than a half-million bushels
- Virginia has eight [Oyster Regions](#) each producing oysters with their own distinct flavor



FURTHER BACKGROUND

While Virginia oysters are served at many of the most celebrated restaurants in America the true Virginia oyster experience happens only when one visits Virginia:

- For a true “immersive experience” take the [Chef’s Table Tour](#) with Pleasure House Oysters of Virginia Beach. Motor out to the oyster beds where oystermen set up a table in shallow water. Oysters are brought right out of the water, opened and paired with Virginia wine for lucky diners. You cannot possibly get fresher oysters than that.
- [Virginia Watermen Heritage Tours](#) offers hands-on oyster experiences at locations along the Chesapeake and rivers. Visitors can experience hands-on “tonging” for oysters and other aquaculture operations
- Taste, touch, and learn what it’s like to be a Virginia waterman through [Virginia Oyster Country’s Oyster Academies](#). VOC is currently offering three academies:
 - o “Rugged and Gritty” (Urbanna, September dates).
 - o “Elegant and Refined” (Irvington, October and November dates).
 - o “Creatively Hipster” (Gloucester, dates TBA).
- The [Virginia Oyster Trail](#) brings together agri-artisans, restaurants, artists, cultural sites, restaurants and lodging, enabling visitors to craft their own Virginia oyster experience.
- More than 25 Virginia [oyster festivals](#) and special events take place from now through the end of the year
- [Merroir](#) restaurant on the banks of the Rappahannock River in Topping, Virginia, has been one of the most celebrated oyster restaurants on the East Coast with write-ups in countless national news sources
- The [Dog and Oyster Vineyard](#) in Irvington produces wines to be paired specifically with oysters
- When diners ask chef TV Flynn of the Tides Inn in Irvington where his oysters come from he points out the window to Carter’s Creek

Contact: Caroline Logan at clogan@virginia.org

PROMOTE OYSTERS IN VIRGINIA WELCOME CENTERS

Impact visitors' travel decisions by reaching your audience upon arrival to Virginia.

Our Travel Counselors assist more than 2 million Virginia visitors each year and influence travelers as they begin their Virginia experience. Let us help market you by participating in our Partnership Marketing and Advertising Program. Please visit www.vatc.org or www.himediallc.com to see all advertising opportunities at Virginia Welcome Centers and Safety Rest Areas.

Contact: Marie Henderson at mhenderson@virginia.org



LEVERAGE YOUR MARKETING DOLLARS THROUGH A VTC MARKETING GRANT

Extend your marketing budgets by applying for a VTC Marketing Leverage Program Grant. This is a research-based, and measurable matching grant program. The good news is that partners can use their EXISTING marketing budgets as matching dollars.

For more information, visit <http://www.vatc.org/PAM/leverageprog/>

Contact: Steve Galyean at sgalyean@virginia.org
Angela Wiggins at awiggins@virginia.org



In 2015, Governor Terry McAuliffe announced the launch of the Virginia Oyster Trail, a brand new way for travelers to experience Virginia through taste.

The Virginia Oyster Trail, administered by the [Artisans Center of Virginia](#), is a visitor-directed experiential “journey of discovery” program featuring Virginia’s Oyster regions; with unique waterman/aqua-artisan sites, inviting community narratives and many hospitality, creative, culinary, cultural and activity points of interest to be found along the way. Fundamental to its visitor experience attributes, the program focuses on increasing awareness of the benefits Virginia Oysters have on local economies; with emphasis on community development, environmental stewardship, entrepreneurial growth, health attributes and the cultural integration of Virginia’s distinctive aquaculture way of life.

Are you interested in becoming a trail site? Visit www.virginiaoystertrail.com



VIRGINIA IS FOR OYSTER LOVERS MERCHANDISE

For Virginia is for Oyster Lovers branded merchandise, please visit the official [Virginia is for Lovers Shop!](#)

For wholesale inquiries, [please contact Target Marketing](#), our officially licensed merchandiser for Virginia is for Lovers gear.



Oyster-related content is an exciting new driver to Virginia.org and generates strong user engagement on social media. As of September 2016 our social media platforms reach millions of people each year.

Since marketing Virginia oysters, Virginia Tourism has seen a 31% increase in visitation to Oyster-related content overall; 16% increase in visitation to the Virginia is for Oyster Lovers landing page; 47% increase in visitation to Virginia Oyster Festivals content.

