

# Cooking Corner

Tips To Help You

## For Lent, Look To The Lean Protein: Seafood

(NAPSA)—Many of the world's two billion Christians observe Lent, the 40-day period of reflection, charitable contributions and prayer before Easter, with some form of fasting, usually by substituting fish for meat one or two days a week. This centuries-old tradition—it originated in the fourth century—is good for the body as well as the spirit. Eating seafood twice a week can not only cut your risk of heart attack, it also may aid in weight reduction and overall nutrition.

Research shows fish can protect against heart disease while nourishing the body with high quality protein, vitamins and minerals. The fat found in seafood is rich in polyunsaturates and omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3's make blood clotting more difficult, thereby preventing a heart attack itself. They relax the arteries, help keep them from becoming clogged with plaque and improve blood circulation in the heart. Omega-3's lower blood fats and blood pressure, which makes heart attacks less likely. Omega-3 fatty acids are found in all seafood, fresh, frozen, canned and processed.

Consider the other benefits of seafood: it's a lean protein source, packed with vitamins and minerals, yet low in fat and cholesterol. Seafood is delicious, easy to digest and quick to prepare. A single serving of fish or other seafood (150 grams) provides 50 to 60 percent of an adult's daily protein needs. Yet that same portion of fish (cooked without fat) has only about 85 calories and hardly any carbohydrates.

In New Orleans, where seafood



**Mardi Gras Oyster Stew makes a great feast before—and during—the Lenten fast.**

is virtually an art form, Mardi Gras celebrants traditionally savor oyster stew on the last day of Carnival, which comes from a Latin phrase meaning “removal of meat” and precedes the Lenten Season. This sumptuous recipe is mouth-watering any time. Enjoy it not only for its great flavors but because oysters, mussels and scallops are excellent sources of iron and zinc and have nearly three times as much iron as most meats.

Mardi Gras, meaning “Fat Tuesday,” refers to the Tuesday just before Ash Wednesday, also called Shrove Tuesday. Many churches observe Mardi Gras with a church meal, eating together as a community before the symbolic fasting of Lent begins.

Mardi Gras Oyster Stew is just one of many delectable seafood recipes available online at [www.aboutseafood.com](http://www.aboutseafood.com), the Web site of The National Fisheries Institute.

This recipe is courtesy of the Louisiana Seafood Promotion & Marketing Board.

### Louisiana Mardi Gras Oyster Stew

- 1¼ cups water
- 3 dozen small to medium Louisiana oysters, in their liquor (about 18 ounces)
- ¼ pound (1 stick) unsalted butter
- 1 cup finely chopped celery
- ¾ teaspoon Chef Paul Prudhomme's Seafood Magic
- ½ cup finely chopped green onions
- 2 cups heavy cream

Add the water to the oysters and refrigerate at least 1 hour. Strain and reserve the oysters and oyster water; refrigerate until ready to use. In a large skillet combine the butter, celery, Seafood Magic and ¾ cup of the oyster water. Cook over high heat for 3 minutes, shaking pan (versus stirring) almost constantly. Add the remaining ½ cup oyster water and continue cooking and shaking the pan for 1 minute. Stir in the green onions. Gradually add the cream, whisking constantly. Add the oysters and cook just until the edges curl, about 2 to 4 minutes, whisking constantly. Remove from heat and serve immediately, stirring well as you ladle out the portions. For the main course, ladle 9 oysters, a little of the vegetables and 1 cup of the liquid into each serving bowl. For appetizer, serve ½ of that amount. Serves 4 as a main course or 5 as an appetizer.