

Maritimes in MUSKOKA

Oyster bar elevates events with exquisite food and drink

Fantastic food and well-paired beverages are the hallmarks of the finest events. Be it a wedding, birthday, family gathering or

simply an impromptu dock party, elevating the menu and service ensures happy guests.

A mobile oyster bar and associated catering is a unique way to really take your event to the next level.

Founded by chef & “Chief Oyster Officer” Michael Dixon and sommelier Graidhne Lelieveld-Amiro, Raw By Nature Oyster Co. brings the couple’s passion for the culinary arts directly to Muskoka’s cottages and homes.

“We can set up an oyster bar dockside, on the deck, down at the boathouse, inside the cottage, or on another part of your property,” says Michael. “We cater to all sorts of environments.”

Michael and Graidhne (pronounced Grawn-ya) offer more than just catering: they turn the party into a culinary event.

“It’s about dialing up the fun,” says Michael, who has over 25 years

experience as a chef. “Canadian-sourced, quality oysters are beautiful, especially when paired with the right champagne, wine or other beverages.”

Guests who are already oyster aficionados are sure to find some unique offerings in the presentation, which features a wide array of the freshest east and west coast oysters. But an oyster bar also offers bivalve novices a chance to taste – and learn from the experts.

“I’ve worked with many different foods over the years, but it was the simplicity of the oyster that really drew me to this idea,” says Michael. “There is a certain mystique about them that really inspires me.”

“The most enjoyable food and beverage experiences involve a bit of education. I just love sharing the knowledge and getting someone else excited about oysters.”

This includes explaining the health benefits of this highly nutritious and sustainable food choice. Michael explains that Canadian waters have some of the best oyster farming in the world.

Time for a change

Raw By Nature Oyster Co. came about after Michael decided to leave a position as a private executive chef, a role that involved being on the road 150 days a year on average. “The work-family balance became more important to me each year,” he says.

While doing some soul-searching at the family cottage, Mike and Graidhne began discussing what they would like to do next. Having catered many private functions for several different clients in Muskoka, Mike rediscovered his passion for bringing culinary excellence directly to people’s homes. And the more they thought about oysters – a food they and their children love – the more excited they became.

After a decade of serving in fine dining restaurants such as Canoe and Auberge du Pommier, Graidhne shares her love of wines by working with private clients, sourcing exciting wines and helping them build collections for their own cellars.

As a Nova Scotian, she has a lifelong connection to the ocean – in fact, she is named after the Irish pirate queen Granuaile. Pairing wines with seafood bring these passions together and creates a delightful treat for their Raw by Nature Oyster Co. customers.

Back to the beginning

In many ways, Michael says,

this new venture is a return to a passion he developed in Muskoka when he was relatively new to the restaurant world. A couple of years after graduating from culinary school, he began working at the renowned seafood restaurant, The Compleat Angler in Port Carling.

It was there his love of catering really took hold. Although new to the business, the owners trusted Michael to be in charge of bringing their menu to people’s homes and cottages.

“It just clicked with me. I loved the direct interaction with the customers,” says Michael.

More than oysters

Although oysters are the star of the show, Raw By Nature also features a wide array of other superb seafood. They source lobster from Nova Scotia, scallops from the Bay of Fundy, snow crab from Newfoundland, seasonal produce from local farmers, and other delectable dishes.

“We want to offer something for everyone,” says Michael. “We also have child friendly options, plant-based choices, and steaks on the grill when the party calls for it.”

The team also has kits available for clients to set up their own oyster bar –

complete with a selection of fresh oysters and shucking tools. They even have printable how-to-shuck directions on their website.

The kit doesn’t come with the stunning – and made-in-Muskoka – oyster bar itself, of course. But depending on the day and their schedules,

Michael and Graidhne don’t rule out being able to bring the bar on short notice.

“It’s all about sharing the joy of food,” says Michael. “We are bringing the Maritime brine to the freshwater of Muskoka.”

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Graidhne Lelieveld-Amiro and Michael Dixon of Raw By Nature Oyster Co.



The couple’s children also love oysters, as well as crab, shrimp and other seafood.

