

The World Should Soon Have a Taste of the Best Oyster Brazil Has to Offer

Contributed by Geovana Pagel
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Oyster farmer Paulo Constantino, owner of maritime farm Fazenda Marinha Ostravagante, in the city of Florianópolis, capital of the southern Brazilian state of Santa Catarina, is eager to start selling part of his produce in the foreign market.

"The whole world wants to buy our oysters. We have been visited by interested parties from China, Malaysia, Japan and even the United Arab Emirates," he says. "Our optimum farming conditions and the size of our oysters really appeal to buyers," explains Constantino.

According to him, the company is authorized by the Ministry of Agriculture and has the label of the Federal Inspection Service, which allow it to make nationwide sales. "We sell a lot to São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (Southeast Brazil). We also receive orders from Salvador, Recife, Fortaleza (Northeast), Belo Horizonte (Southeast) and even Manaus (North)," says the businessman.

According to Constantino, in Florianópolis alone there are hundreds of maritime farms, which are underwater areas explored by producers of the mollusk. The oyster variety produced in Santa Catarina is the *Crassostrea gigas*, known as the Pacific Oyster. Presently, the state accounts for 95% of the species' national production.

"The only reason why we do not export yet is that Brazil does not have any law regulating oyster farming. We expect this bureaucratic issue to be solved by July 2008," he explains. "Once we have a specific legislation turned to exports, then we will be able to increase our production by up to 100%," he believes.

At Constantino's farm, the oysters are attached to thousands of buoys distributed across two hectares of sea. The area is divided into four sections, one for each phase of the mollusk's growth, from nursery to lantern (a sort of cage), where the final fattening is carried out.

"During this last stage, oysters are screened, and those that are ready are removed. Those that are not ready go back into the water, where they remain until they have reached the ideal point for sale," he says.

On solid ground, the oysters are treated. The employees remove the shells and make the surfaces flat. Afterwards, the oysters are washed with hyperchlorinated water. Then they are packed in polystyrene, weighted and placed into trucks to be sold.

With the aid of 25 employees, the businessman produces around 12,000 dozens of oysters per month, which are sold at an average price of 12 Brazilian reais (US\$ 6.78) per dozen.

Fazenda Marinha Ostravagante is located in the southeastern portion of the Island of Florianópolis, in the locality of Ribeirão da Ilha, at Baldicero Filomeno Highway, 15,700.

Service

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