

Seafood Safety Assurance

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/Emergencies/ucm251969.htm>

U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Protecting and Promoting Your Health

Consumers Can Be Confident in the Safety of Gulf Seafood

The following is an Op-Ed written by officials from FDA, NOAA, and Louisiana. It published in a number of newspapers in early March 2011.

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We saw firsthand the devastating impact the BP/Deepwater Horizon disaster had on the lives and livelihoods of the Gulf fishing community. We had many opportunities to work with the fishermen and seafood processors throughout the region, and we witnessed their steadfast commitment to ensuring the safety and wholesomeness of their catch every day. We continue to be thankful for their cooperation through the often challenging process of closing and reopening affected waters.

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Driven by science and with human health as the highest priority, the extensive sampling and testing plan allowed areas to open only when every piece of seafood sampled there passed both sensory and chemical testing. We were precautionary on purpose: when there was a *potential* for tainted seafood, waters were closed, and they could only be opened when we could *prove* the seafood from those waters was safe to eat.

Scientists knew already, from real-world experiences (like the Exxon *Valdez* disaster) and laboratory research, that fish can metabolize and excrete oil. Knowing that finfish can clear it from their bodies within days, shrimp and crabs take a little longer, and shellfish like oysters take the longest time, we tested these various types of seafood individually to make sure we didn't miss anything. The results of the tests, all publicly available, should help Americans buy Gulf seafood with confidence: the seafood has consistently tested 100 to 1000 times lower than the safety thresholds established by the FDA for the residues of oil contamination.