



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

Spinach and E. coli

Spinach and E. coli (With Oysters and Gastroenteritis on the Side)

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Over the past few years, those of us who eat have been warned numerous times about the hazards of consuming certain foods. One prominent example is spinach. I read that spinach contamination is only one of several food-borne illnesses that have cropped-up in recent years.

My major concern is a recent scare about eating uncooked oysters. I love those slimy things. So do old folks; no teeth required. Down the hatch!

You Are What You Eat

Still, I find reading the newspapers is having an effect on my once carefree eating habits. I have tried to ignore the health cliché, "You are what you eat." My take on it is, and mentioned in a previous article: "In spite of what you eat, you still are."

Today, when I think of ordering some fare from, say, the Chesapeake Bay, I recall the study that chicken waste flowing into the Bay has led to massive contamination. A significant number of fish have been caught with deformed heads, as well as sores, lesions, and strange looking bumps on their bodies.¹ Some fishermen became ill after they handled the fish. They complained of skin lesions, fatigue, and light-headedness.

I ate at restaurants in New Orleans and Los Angeles that have stopped serving oysters unless they are cooked. I suppose they will eventually do the same for spinach.

Holly and I like to visit the Capitol Grill Restaurant when we are in D.C. The place has a fine selection of oysters. The last time we were there, we decided to share a dozen oysters on the half-shell for an appetizer. It was a standard order for us at this restaurant.

Out came a huge plate of ice, lemons, vinegar with horse radish sauces, and 12 succulent sources of protein. As I was eating them, half-way to gastronomic heaven, I said to Holly, "If I were a condemned prisoner, ordering my last meal, part of that meal would be oysters."

- Reporterette, "Yeah, and no concern about getting sick."
- Reporter, "Hmm?"
- "You'd be dead shortly anyway."

As I was writing this report, I saw a newscast about another crop of spinach that did not pass muster. It was not fit for human consumption, so it was being shipped to hog farms. Let the pigs worry about E. coli. Besides, our bacon will now have more iron and calcium.

Here is a recent ABC news release about the oysters problem, with my comments in italics:

- The number of people affected by contaminated Tasmanian oysters has climbed to nearly 240 across three states in Australia. *Oh? You are not aware of the famous company named Oysters Tasmania that ships Tasmanian oysters to New Orleans and Los Angeles? You need to get out more.*

¹ www.usgs.gov/themes/FS-189-97/.

- The contamination was caused by a broken sewerage pipe on a private property, which leaked human waste into waters used by an oyster farm. *Down the hatch!*
- "The feedback we've been getting from customers, they've been saying 'we know you've got a good product'," an Oysters Tasmania representative said. *The ABC report did not clarify if this comment was made before or after the leakage occurred.*

The next time you are in a seafood restaurant, try this one:

- You, "What oysters do you have on the menu today?"
- Waiter, "We have Blue Points, Kumamotos, and Olympias."
- You, "I'm disappointed. I was hoping for Tasmanians."

Here's a salute to spinach. I'll make-up one for oysters after I've conducted more research and have recovered from a slight case of gastroenteritis.

The E. coli Ballard of Popeye the Sailor Man

Strum, strum, strum...

I'm Popeye the sailor man,
I eat all the spinach I can.
I eat spinach with ease,
and in spite of disease,
I'm Popeye the sailor man!

E. Coli is nature's plan,
for Popeye the sailor man.
And while spinach is tasty,
it makes me look pasty,
I'm Popeye the sailor man!