

Mussels (Fish & Seafood)

Interesting facts: Ounce for ounce mussel meat contains more protein than beef stock, much less fat, many more mineral nutrients and a quarter of the calories. Mussels are super high in B12 and sometimes considered a brain food.

How to select: Always buy wild caught, harvested not farmed. When buying mussels, the shells should be bright, undamaged and closed. Open mussels should be given a squeeze and a tap – if they close they are still alive; if not they are dead and unfit for consumption.

How to clean and store: As soon as you can, take the mussels out of their packaging and transfer them into a colander and cover with ice. Put the colander inside a bowl so the ice drains off as it melts - don't allow the mussels to be submerged in water or they will drown. Store the mussels in the fridge or a cooler and they should be fine for at least 24 hours.

How to prepare and cook: The mussel's 'beard' is known as the byssus. It is used by the mussel to attach itself to surfaces with the aid of secreted adhesive cement. Before cooking the beard should either be cut off or pulled out with a sharp tug, then discarded. Once this is done, you can steam the mussels.

For 1½ to 4½ pounds mussels, put 1 cup liquid (water or a mix of water and white wine or beer) in a 4- to 6-quart pot. Bring to a boil; then dump in the mussels and cover. Reduce heat to moderate and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mussels open wide. Be sure to discard any mussels that have opened prior to steaming as this means they are dead.