Cleaning Your Shells

- Be courteous of other scallopers and move your boat away from the scalloping areas first, then anchor. It’s no fun scalloping when others are cleaning their catch.

- When done cleaning scallops, do not discard shells in rivers, channels, springs, or in the water at boat ramps or marinas. Shells could fill these areas, incurring costs to remove the shells and causing negative impacts on swimmers, wildlife, and navigation. Discard scallop shells out in open Gulf waters, or store shells in a bag and discard at home.

- Want to keep shells to use for crafts or garden cover? Try placing the shells in a net bag and putting them back into the water. Small fish and crabs will be happy to clean the shells.

Care and Handling

- If you catch scallops near natural or artificial seagrass beds, place them on a flat square or rectangular rake, and put them in water. Water temperature should be 75°F or less. Water 4 to 10 feet deep where they anchor, put up a divers-down flag, and within 300 feet of a divers-down flag on open waters and within 500 feet of any boating or fishing area.

- Display above the vessel’s highest point. Should only be displayed while snorkelers are in the water 4 to 10 feet deep where they anchor, put up a divers-down flag on open waters and within 500 feet of any boating or fishing area. In addition, when bringing scallops to the boat, place on ice, especially if fresh water gets into their shells. When brought to the boat, scallops should be immediately placed on ice, especially if fresh water gets into their shells.

- Small fish and crabs will be happy to clean the shells.

RECIPES

SCALLOP CÉVICHÉ

Mix one cup lime juice, one cup lemon juice, one cup of chopped cilantro, four finely chopped and seeded Serrano peppers, three finely chopped cloves of garlic, one coarsely chopped red onion, one tablespoon sea salt, and ground black pepper to taste in a zipper-style bag. Two hours before serving, add in about two pounds of scallops. Drain away excess juices and assemble the céviche over salad greens or avocado half. Touch everything off with a garnish of cilantro leaves.

SIMPLY DELICIOUS SCALLOPS

Sauté 3 pounds Florida scallops in 2 tablespoons melted butter in a large skillet over medium heat until opaque, about 1 minute. Overcooking makes the texture rubbery. Remove scallops from skillet and set aside. Wipe out skillet, then melt ½ cup butter over medium-low heat, add 2 cloves garlic, and salt and pepper to taste. Stir for 3 minutes and add scallops. Serve immediately over prepared pasta of your choice, such as angel hair. Garnish with fresh dill and season with freshly ground pepper.

*Recipe and photo courtesy of Tommy Thompson.
Cleaning Your Shells

To avoid disturbing seagrass or to collect them from a shallow-draft boat in rivers, channels, or in the water at boat ramps, display the divers-down flag in open waters and within 1 mile of the shore. Should only be displayed while snorkelers are in the water; set the flag above the vessel’s highest point. The flag must be at least 12 inches by 12 inches; mandatory when using a mask and snorkel. The flag is tethered to diver; must be visible to other watercraft. The flag can be used while the divers are underwater. Young scallops are easier to find in deeper cuts through grass beds or on seagrass. Future genetic studies and experimental restocking efforts that used free-planting methods to establish new scallop populations are planned.

COLLECTING

Scallops may be spotted or near the bottom of seagrass beds, usually lying on their ventral shells. Often, they are easiest to find in deeper cuts through grass beds or along borders where the sand/mud meets the edge of the grasses. Scallops have dozens of neon-blue eyes and may try to swim away when they see you, but they do not swim fast or far. Keep collected scallops in a mesh bag and put them in a cooler for transport to shore. Place scallops in a mesh bag and put them in a cooler for transport to shore. When brought to the boat, scallops should be immediately placed on ice in a cooler for the trip to shore, unless you decide to clean the scallops while on the water. Scallops are quite sensitive to dry conditions, so be sure to keep them cool and moist. They will usually die shortly after being placed on ice, especially if fresh water gets into their shells. It is also recommended to keep collected scallops in a mesh bag and put them in a cooler for transport to shore.

legal requirements

In Florida, commercial harvest of bay scallops is banned. In general, recreational harvesters need a saltwater fishing license to harvest bay scallops, even when fishing from shore. There are some exceptions, listed in the FWC “Florida Saltwater Recreational Fishing Regulations,” which is available in boat shops. FWC offices, or at the FWC website (http://myfwc.com). Exemptions include when fishing (scalloping) from a for-hire vessel (guide, charter, party boat) that has a valid vessel license.

The season runs from approximately late June through late September. (Always consult the FWC website for dates of current season.) Harvesting is allowed from the Pasco-Hernando county line (near Aripeka) to the west bank of the Mexico Beach Canal (in Bay County) to the Pasco-Hernando county line (near Aripeka). The bag limit is 2 gallons of whole scallops (in the shell), or 1 pint of scallop meat per person per day. In addition, no more than 10 gallons of whole scallops or 1/2 gallon of scallop meat may be possessed aboard any vessel at any time. You may harvest scallops only by hand or with a landing or dip net. Scallops must remain in the legal scalloping area while in possession of scallops on the water, including the point where they return to land. See more on the legal requirements for divers-down flags in the equipment section.

recipes

**Scallop Ceviche**

Sauté 3 pounds Florida scallops in 2 tablespoons melted butter. Drain away excess juices and assemble in a large bowl with the following:

- Lime juice to taste
- Black pepper to taste in a zipper-style bag.

Gently toss. Refrigerate a few hours. Serve immediately over prepared pasta of your choice, about 1 minute. Overcooking makes the texture rubbery.

**Scallop Stock**

1 cup scallop water

Scallops flourished and supported a productive fishery for many centuries. At one time, scallops were reported from as far east as West Palm Beach and as far west as Pensacola. Today, populations can only be found in selected locations with expansive seagrass beds along Florida’s west coast — principally in St. Joseph Bay, the Steinatchee area of the Big Bend, and near the Crystal and Homosassa Rivers. Healthy seagrass meadows are essential for maintaining scallop populations, so remember to practice responsible boating, and avoid damaging the seagrass beds.

BIG BEND IS HOME TO THE CORE POPULATION

To monitor bay scallop populations in the state and maintain a plentiful breeding population, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission annually reviews the status of the scallop stock in the Gulf of Mexico. Results of surveys have continually shown that the scallop population within the Big Bend counties is key to the sustainability of the recreational harvest.

The scallops along the west coast of Florida are composed of several different populations, or subpopulations. Some scientific studies have compared the genetics from different populations and have shown that the Steinatchee area may be supplying larvae to other subpopulations. Over time, the core population expands and contracts on the edges, leading to variable catches from year to year. Unlike other areas where scallop populations have crashed due to overfishing, degraded water quality, and loss of critical seagrass habitat, the Big Bend supports healthy, well-sustained populations almost every year. Efforts to restore scallop populations are ongoing in several areas of Florida, including the southwest region, where scallops flourished and supported a productive commercial fishery in the 1950s and 1960s.

Early restocking efforts that used free-planted scallops were not very successful. Scallops are known to be “synchronized spawners” when one spawns, they all do. A number of adult, spawning scallops were placed in cages on bay bottoms where healthy populations previously existed. It was found that hatchery-reared scallops in close proximity appeared to have an increased chance of successfully reproducing over natural scallops that are sparsely distributed. Recent studies by researchers include scallops from University of Florida, University of South Florida, Mote Marine Laboratory, and FWC, have shown that adult populations may quickly rebound in some southwest Florida locations when hatchery-reared “pediveligers,” the last planktonic stage, are introduced into temporary enclosures on seagrass. Future genetic studies and experimental releases in southwest Florida are expected to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of using aquaculture to increase scallop populations.

CONTROLLED HARVESTING

Florida, commercial harvest of bay scallops is banned. In general, recreational harvesters need a saltwater fishing license to harvest bay scallops, even when fishing from shore. There are some exceptions, listed in the FWC “Florida Saltwater Recreational Fishing Regulations,” which is available in boat shops. FWC offices, or at the FWC website (http://myfwc.com). Exemptions include when fishing (scalloping) from a for-hire vessel (guide, charter, party boat) that has a valid vessel license.

The season runs from approximately late June through late September. (Always consult the FWC website for dates of current season.) Harvesting is allowed from the west bank of the Mexico Beach Canal (in Bay County) to the Pasco-Hernando county line (near Aripeka). The bag limit is 2 gallons of whole scallops (in the shell), or 1 pint of scallop meat per person per day. In addition, no more than 10 gallons of whole scallops or 1/2 gallon of scallop meat may be possessed aboard any vessel at any time. You may harvest scallops only by hand or with a landing or dip net. Scallops must remain in the legal scalloping area while in possession of scallops on the water, including the point where they return to land. See more on the legal requirements for divers-down flags in the equipment section.
This guide to recreational scalloping includes educational information about scallops and scalloping. The boat ramp and marina locator map shows local water-access points in southern Taylor County near Steinhatchee and Keaton Beach. This map is not intended for navigational use. Channel markers may not be where shown, and navigability may be tide dependent. For navigational purposes, use NOAA nautical chart 11407, find certified printers, or view online at www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov.

**BOAT RAMPS**

1. Jena Ramp - West end of CR 358, Jena
2. Steinhatchee Boat Ramp (former site of Ideal Marina) - 100 1st Avenue SE, Steinhatchee
3. Dallus Creek Landing - West end of Dallus Creek Road, off CR 361 (shallow draft boats only)
4. Hagen's Cove Recreation Area - West end of Hagen's Cove Road, off CR 361 (shallow draft boats only)
5. Dark Island Boat Ramp - 22058 Dark Island Road, Dark Island (shallow draft boats only)
6. Keaton Beach Marina Boat Ramp - 20650 Keaton Beach Drive, Keaton Beach
7. Keaton Beach Boat Ramp - 20131 Beach Road (CR 361), Keaton Beach

**MARINAS**

1. River Haven Marina - 1110 Riverside Drive, Steinhatchee
2. Sea Hag Marina - 322 Riverside Drive, Steinhatchee
3. Keaton Beach Marina - 20650 Keaton Beach Drive, Keaton Beach
4. Good Times Marina - 7022 SW Hwy 358, Steinhatchee

*Scallops may be found in any location where seagrasses are present. Good places to begin searching are depths near the Bird Racks, but watch out for obstructions close to the positions located on the map.*
This guide to recreational scalloping includes educational information about scallops and scalloping. The boat ramp and marina locator map shows local water-access points in southern Taylor County near Steinhatchee and Keaton Beach. This map is not intended for navigational use. Channel markers may not be where shown, and navigability may be tide dependent. For navigational purposes, use NOAA nautical chart 11407, find certified printers, or view online at www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov.

BOAT RAMPS
1. Jena Ramp - West end of CR 358, Jena
2. Steinhatchee Boat Ramp (former site of Ideal Marina) - 100 1st Avenue SE, Steinhatchee
3. Dallus Creek Landing - West end of Dallus Creek Road, off CR 361 (shallow draft boats only)
4. Hagen’s Cove Recreation Area - West end of Hagen’s Cove Road, off CR 361 (shallow draft boats only)
5. Dark Island Boat Ramp - 22058 Dark Island Road, Dark Island (shallow draft boats only)
6. Keaton Beach Marina - 20650 Keaton Beach Drive, Keaton Beach
7. Keaton Beach Boat Ramp - 20131 Beach Road (CR 361), Keaton Beach

MARINAS
1. River Haven Marina - 1110 Riverside Drive, Steinhatchee
2. Sea Hag Marina - 322 Riverside Drive, Steinhatchee
3. Keaton Beach Marina - 20650 Keaton Beach Drive, Keaton Beach
4. Good Times Marina - 7022 SW Hwy 358, Steinhatchee

Scallops may be found in any location where seagrasses are present. Good places to begin searching are depths near the Bird Racks, but watch out for obstructions close to the positions located on the map.