

# **Deborah Keller, OysterMom**

## **Tallahassee, Florida**

**Tell us a bit about your career. How did you get into the work you do, and what are you doing currently?**

I worked to launch the in-water-column oyster aquaculture industry in Florida and became one of the first oyster farmers starting in 2016. I farmed 1.5 acres while working for the Nature Conservancy (TNC), then retired from TNC and became a full-time farmer, producer, shellfish processor, marketer, and caterer of Oyster Raw Bars. I am currently transitioning out of full-time farmer and continuing on to the processor, marketer, and caterer side of the business.

**What does responsible seafood mean to you? How does that fit into your business?**

Sustainable production of shellfish is very important to me and the future of our bays. It was one of two reasons I engaged in the industry. The second reason was to revive the local shellfish industry producing a network of jobs and incomes for many. Third was to produce a great-tasting oyster! Nothing beats an Apalachicola area oyster.

**What's the most important thing your customers should know about the seafood they're eating?**

It is sustainably grown and safe to consume.

**Why is it important to you to take time out of your busy schedule to share your story and raise awareness about seafood responsibility?**

I have advocated for oysters in the water and the shellfish aquaculture industry since I jumped into it. Most people just don't have a clue. I frequently promote the local oyster industry and the value of oysters to our ecosystem.

**What does the future of seafood look like to you?**

Frankly, I am concerned. Climate change, the potential for relaxed environmental protections of our waters, and over-harvesting of wild stocks are daunting. Without careful management, things could go downhill quickly.

**What is your favorite seafood preparation?**

One of my oysters on the grill until it just begins to open, then shucked into a bowl of melted butter with fresh garlic. Served right then and there, with a cold beer on the side. Pure heaven.