



# Winedog Speaks

## On the Half Shell

We are faced with one of those great mystery stories this week and move over Agatha Christy because our tale involves delicious food. Our challenge began with an email received a couple weeks ago from a reader in Wilmington, Ohio. Her dilemma is a common one starting with a great food experience years ago and the subsequent search for a recipe she hopes will duplicate a vivid memory of “the best oyster dressing I’ve ever tasted.”

The lesson is not a new one. Acquire those great recipes before they are gone. I have several people in my life as I’m sure most of you do who are living treasures when it comes to very special dishes. I’ve mentioned in the past that time is a fragile commodity and there are things all of us put off doing. Sometimes we simply procrastinate too long and miss out on an opportunity that we didn’t really think had an expiration date.

The reader who contacted me enjoyed a special oyster dressing recipe lovingly prepared by a relative for many years mainly during the holidays. This particular version of dressing had a light, fluffy texture rather than the heavy styling most associate with oyster dressing. Our mission is to find a recipe that closely approximates the one they enjoyed in the past.

I have to tell you that doing so based on a verbal description of any food is virtually impossible. Think about it. How would you describe your Grandmother’s beef barley soup in a way that would accurately convey the subtle nuances and seasonings that made it so very special?

I can’t promise that this recipe will do it but I figure it’s worth a try for one of our friends out there in distress. I pray this one will get you a little closer to your goal!

## **Winedog Oyster Dressing** (Will serve a group of 6 to 8.)

8 cups bread crumbs  
8 tablespoons butter  
1 large (12 oz.) container select oysters with juice  
2 or 3 cups low sodium chicken stock  
½ cup chopped celery  
½ teaspoon salt  
1¼ teaspoons poultry seasoning  
1/8 teaspoon black pepper



Pull crumb from crusts or 3 or 4 day-old white bread and crumble lightly between palms of hands; do not use crusts. Crumbs should be fine—about twice the size of rice grains. Melt butter in large skillet, when hot, stir in the crumbs. Continue heating over low heat, turning crumbs constantly until all are coated

with butter and slightly brown. Remove from heat and add other ingredients other than oysters, mixing thoroughly but lightly.

Place your chicken stock into your skillet and heat to a low simmer. Add your oysters and gently cook until the edges just begin to curl. Add in the juices from your oysters. Transfer your firmed up oysters to a plate using a slotted spoon and cut them to small pieces about the size of chickpeas. Transfer oysters and your heated broth into your crumb mix and gently toss. Use only enough of your liquid to make your crumbs very moist but they should not be swimming.

Transfer your stuffing to a large casserole dish and place dish into a preheated 375°F oven on middle shelf uncovered. Bake for 50 minutes until the top is lightly browned and just beginning to form a crust.

Serve warm with all of your other goodies!

I hope as all of us prepare to enjoy our Thanksgiving holiday you will take a moment to contemplate what the holidays are all about and what message you want to share with your loved ones as everyone gathers at the table. When you think about it, how often do you have a captive audience of such importance long enough to actually share thoughts with?

If you have loved ones around you and a meal on the table you have good reason to be thankful. I would also give some thought as to what kind of legacy you pass on by your actions and not just your words. Our children learn from what we do much more effectively than just what we say. Can you touch someone else's life who is less fortunate in a way that your young one's can understand? Can you explain to them that long after you are gone their actions in showing love to others will keep you alive in a very special way?

I pray that all of you will have a joyous Thanksgiving this year. I am very thankful for you and the joy all of you have brought in to my life. Cheers.

*Jerry Allison, a native of Warren County in Southwestern Ohio, has been in the fine wine and fine dining field for 30 years in the South Florida, Chicago and Southwestern Ohio markets. He writes a weekly syndicated column, manages a fine wine business and is the executive chef for Winedog Fine Wines and Catering Services. You can visit his column archive at [www.winedog.com](http://www.winedog.com) and take your comments and questions directly to him at 888-288-0668 or email him at [winedog@winedog.com](mailto:winedog@winedog.com). He has resided with his wife and two sons since 1999 in the country outside of Morrow, Ohio*

