

Freezer Success Is No Fish Story



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Back in early 2007, Mark Maynard, the president of Southeastern SeaProducts, Inc., in Melbourne, Fla., had an idea—one that could potentially transform the way raw oysters and clams are prepared for wholesale seafood suppliers.

After two years and extensive testing at Praxair's Food Technology Laboratory in Burr Ridge, Ill., he has unveiled an entirely new patent-pending process for freezing raw oysters and clams.

"Most shellfish processors freeze oysters and clams after the organisms have already perished," said Maynard. "With our new process that Praxair helped us develop, the oysters and clams are individually quick-frozen live, instantly. That way, they retain all their natural juices, flavor and shape. And we can shuck them mechanically instead of by hand, the more time-consuming and costly traditional method."

Maynard worked closely with North American Industrial Gases **Food Support Manager Debbie Benjamin** to develop the process. "Oysters and clams are delicate organisms, and the way you apply the cryogen, in this case liquid nitrogen, can have an enormous effect on their taste and texture," said Benjamin. "By doing evaluations with our full range of freezers and cryogen application settings, we were able to identify the optimum system for freezing both oysters and clams."

Ultimately, Benjamin and the Food Lab team recommended a specially configured *Cold Front*[™] Value-Engineered U-4 tunnel freezer for Southeastern, which has since more than delivered the results Maynard was hoping for.

"I couldn't be more pleased with the freezer," said Maynard. "It took a while to determine which system would work best, but the Praxair team was extremely patient, innovative and helpful throughout the entire process.

"We've now created a preparation method that is unique in the marketplace, and I think most people would agree the clams and oysters



Quick-frozen hard-shell clams roll off the conveyor belt of a Praxair-supplied cryogenic tunnel freezer at Southeastern SeaProducts' Melbourne, Fla., facility. With help from Lou Perez, right, and Praxair's Food Lab team, Southeastern's President Mark Maynard, pictured, is pioneering an entirely new patent-pending process for freezing raw oysters and clams.

taste a lot better frozen this way than with traditional methods."

After receiving the oysters and clams from the wholesalers Southeastern delivers to, restaurants and other retail distributors can serve them as fresh. "Since they're frozen live, they are considered as fresh in the industry," explained Maynard.

The fact that the system allows Southeastern to freeze both clams and oysters using a single freezer is another advantage. "Through a few simple adjustments, they can switch from a line of oysters to clams and adjust the cryogen applications for different types of oysters," said **East Region Account Manager Lou Perez**. "Oysters and clams fresh-frozen in this manner also have a longer shelf life than those frozen by traditional methods," noted Perez. "They can store them in holding freezers for up to a year. Before, they would have to ship them much sooner."

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