



Certified Shellfish Processing Facility: Rules and Regulations

Shellfish products in Florida include edible species of oysters, clams, scallops and mussels. Shellfish may be sold shucked, raw in-shell, fresh or frozen depending on the species. All shellfish offered for commercial or retail sale must be processed at a certified shellfish processing facility. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) Division of Aquaculture is responsible for inspecting and certifying all shellfish processing facilities in Florida. The following are requirements for certification:

- Shellfish Processing Facility Certification Application;
- Wholesale Dealers License or Aquaculture Certificate of Registration;
- Certified shellfish processing facility tags;
- Required processing equipment;
- Facility source water analysis;
- Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plan;
- Shellfish processing facility certification inspection;
- Proper sanitation; and
- Employee training program.

Certified shellfish processing facilities are classified as a shellstock shipper (SS) or shucker-packer (SP). Once certified, a shellfish processing facility is inspected quarterly by the Division of Aquaculture to ensure compliance and consumer safety pursuant to [Rule 5L-1, Florida Administrative Code \(F.A.C.\)](#).

BUILDINGS

Buildings and structures need to be suitable in size and designed to facilitate sanitary operations for food processing. There must be sufficient space for the placement of equipment, storage of materials and food processing activities. The building must be constructed so that floors, walls and ceilings are smooth and easily cleaned to prevent contamination of food products, food packaging materials and food contact surfaces. It must provide adequate lighting and ventilation, a sufficient sanitary water supply and a proper wastewater or sewage treatment system.

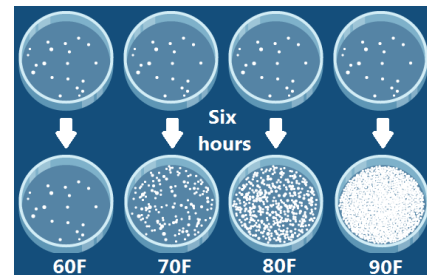
All certified shellfish processing facilities must provide employees with sanitary and accessible toilet facilities. Handwashing facilities must also be established in easily accessible locations where employees handle food products, food packaging materials or food contact surfaces.



Typical oyster shucking station

EQUIPMENT

All equipment must be constructed so that it is smooth and easily cleanable to prevent the contamination of food products. Food contact surfaces include any surface that comes in contact with food and must be corrosion-resistant, made of nontoxic materials and designed to withstand the processing environment.



Bacterial growth at various temperatures

REFRIGERATION / COOLING

Shellfish intended for raw consumption are classified as a high-risk food due to the presence of naturally-occurring pathogenic bacteria in the marine environment. Post-harvest temperature control is critical to minimize bacterial growth and prevent consumer illness.

As such, shellfish received from a harvester must be placed under refrigeration at 45°F or less by specific times. These times vary based on the type of shellfish harvested, month of harvest and the cooling option used. For more information on specific harvest times, see [Refrigeration Requirements for Shellfish to a Certified Shellfish Processing Facility](#).

Shellfish received from another certified shellfish processing facility must be pre-chilled, shipped under refrigeration and have accompanying documentation of the product temperature at loading as well as date and time of shipment. Once shellfish are received, they must be immediately placed under refrigeration at 45°F or less (*unless under an approved tempering plan*). Shellfish must remain under refrigeration except during necessary periods in processing; **they are not permitted to be out of refrigeration for more than two cumulative hours at any point during processing.**



TAGGING

Certified shellfish processing facilities must meet the requirements of [Rule 5L-1.007, F.A.C.](#) in the Comprehensive Shellfish Control Code. A certified shellfish processing facility tag with a minimum size of 2⁵/₈ by 5¹/₄ inches is required to be affixed to each container of shellstock prior to being offered for sale. The certified shellfish processing facility tag shall contain legible, waterproof, indelible information arranged in the specific order as follows:

- 1) Certified shellfish processing facility's name and address;
- 2) Certified shellfish processing facility certification number;
- 3) Saltwater Wholesale Dealers License (WD#) or Aquaculture Certificate of Registration number (AQ#);
- 4) Original shipper's certification number, including the state abbreviation;
- 5) Date of harvest;
- 6) Harvest area identification (Florida harvest areas use the four digit code);
- 7) Type of shellfish (i.e., common name);
- 8) Quantity of shellfish;
- 9) All oyster tags from Florida certified shellfish processing facilities must clearly and permanently display the words "Sell By" followed by a date when the certified shellfish processing facility determines the product will reach the end of its shelf life. The sell by date shall consist of the numerical month, day and year;
- 10) The following statements in bold capitalized type:

"THIS TAG IS REQUIRED TO BE ATTACHED UNTIL CONTAINER IS EMPTY AND THEREAFTER KEPT ON FILE, IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER, FOR 90 DAYS."

and

"RETAILER: DATE WHEN THE LAST SHELLFISH FROM THIS CONTAINER SOLD OR SERVED _____."

11) If shellstock exceeds the requirements in subsection [Rule 5L-1.008 \(5\), \(7-8\), F.A.C.](#), the shellstock processor tag shall be identified as restricted use shellstock with the printed language **"FOR SHUCKING ONLY BY A CERTIFIED SHELLFISH PROCESSING FACILITY"** or **"FOR POST HARVEST PROCESSING ONLY."** in bold, 14-point font and the tag shall be green in color; and

12) Shellstock and shucked shellfish containers shall be labeled with the following statements: "Consumer information: There is a risk associated with consuming raw shellfish. If you have chronic illness of the liver, stomach or blood or have immune disorders, you are at greater risk of serious illness from raw shellfish and should eat shellfish fully cooked. If unsure of your risk, consult a physician." and "Keep Refrigerated".

Containers of oysters shall not be tagged with both a green tag and a white tag at anytime. See [Shellfish Tagging Requirements](#) for more information.

Example certified
shellfish
processing facility
tag

Name of Certified Shellfish Processing Facility	
KEEP REFRIGERATED	Address
Facility Cert. # FL XXXX SS	WD or AQ # XXXXXX
ORIGINAL SHIPPER'S CERT. NO. (IF OTHER THAN ABOVE): _____	
HARVEST DATE: _____	
HARVEST AREA: _____	
TYPE OF SHELLFISH: _____	
QUANTITY OF SHELLFISH: _____	
SELL BY: _____	
THIS TAG IS REQUIRED TO BE ATTACHED UNTIL CONTAINER IS EMPTY OR IS RETAGGED AND THEREAFTER KEPT ON FILE, IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER, FOR 90 DAYS.	
RETAILER: DATE WHEN LAST SHELLFISH FROM THIS CONTAINER SOLD OR SERVED _____	

HAZARD ANALYSIS CRITICAL CONTROL POINT

Every certified shellfish processing facility must establish and follow a HACCP plan, which identifies food safety hazards at each step of processing and necessary safety controls. Records must be maintained and reviewed according to the facilities HACCP plan. See the [Guidebook for the Preparation of HACCP Plans](#) for more information on developing your facility's plan. Division staff can also assist certified shellfish processing facilities in developing an effective HACCP plan.

SANITATION REQUIREMENTS

All certified shellfish processing facilities must establish a sanitation monitoring routine and keep a record of sanitation monitoring. Record example forms can be found on the Division's website at: www.FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Shellfish-Processing-Facility-Certification

Sanitation monitoring activities must include the following:

- Monitoring the safety of water for processing;
- Monitoring the condition and cleanliness of food contact surfaces;
- Preventing cross-contamination;
- Maintaining hand washing, hand sanitizing and toilet facilities;
- Protecting shellfish from adulterants;
- Properly labeling, storing and using toxic compounds;
- Ensuring that employees with adverse health conditions do not come into contact with shellfish or food contact surfaces; and
- Excluding pests.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Certified shellfish processing facilities are inspected for the condition of the following:

- Plants and grounds;
- Plumbing and related facilities;
- Utilities;
- Disposal of other waste;
- Equipment condition and cleaning, maintenance and construction of non-food contact surfaces;
- Shellfish storage and handling;
- Processing controls;
- Supervision;
- Transportation;
- Labeling and tagging; and
- Shipping documents and records/written recall procedures.

PROCESSING AND HANDLING

Certified shellfish processing facilities may choose to become certified in additional types of processing such as shucking shellstock, heat shock, wet storage or post harvest processing. Additional requirements for these processing methods can be found in [Rule Chapter 5L-1, F.A.C.](#).

Once a shellfish processing facility becomes certified, it will be inspected quarterly by the Division. For more information or copies of forms and factsheets, contact the Division or visit: www.FDACS.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Aquaculture/Shellfish-Processing-Facility-Certification.

