

New Jersey Shellfish

Fisherman in New Jersey harvest more surf clams and ocean quahogs than any other state. If you ever eat clam chowder, spaghetti with clam sauce or fried clams, there's a very good chance that the clams you are eating were harvested right here in New Jersey.

These clams are often called sea clams because they are harvested offshore in deep water. The clams are dredged up from the bottom and packed into cages on the deck of the ship. Sea clamming is a very dangerous job. There are often storms and very large waves. Because the clams are stored in big cages, the boat can become unstable and tip during bad weather.

Blue crabs (shown below) are another important New Jersey harvest. Maybe you've even had the opportunity to go crabbing when you visit the shore. The scientific name of the blue crab *Callinectes sapidus* means "beautiful swimmer". Blue crabs are good swimmers because one set of legs is actually shaped like little paddles. As blue crabs grow, they shed their shell, called an exoskeleton. It is called an exoskeleton because it is on the outside of their bodies. Be careful if you find a live blue crab. It can give you a good pinch with its claws.

