

1941

AMERICA EATS

WHEN IS A DUCK NOT A DUCK?

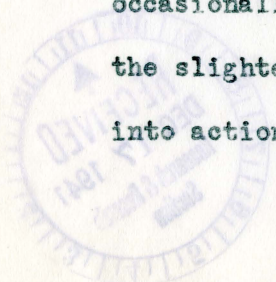
In Washington State the answer to the above question would be "When it's a geoduck." Contrary to the sound of the name and the correct pronunciation (goo-y-duck) of it, the geoduck is not a bird by any means, but a large clam resembling a headless duck. The specie is native to Pacific Coast waters extending from British Columbia to San Diego, California. The quiet waters and the expansive sandy beaches of the Puget Sound area tend to promulgate a larger type of the specie than are found in any other section of the Western Coast.

The combined pleasures of hunting this huge clam and the enjoyable feast after its capture, are the motif for thousands of group parties during the mid-summer season at the innumerable spots throughout the Northwest where this *glycymeris generosa* abounds.

There is no closed season on geoducks, but the months of June and July have proven to be the most productive time of the year, as this elusive mamul is only taken at low tide. The equipment necessary on this expedition is a sharp spade, rubber boots, and a strong back to withstand the rigor of the fast digging that must be engaged in to prevent losing the quarry.

Locating the geoduck upon a sandy beach is made possible by the protrusion of the little red-tipped "neck" several inches above the shore, occasionally spouting a tiny geyser of water. The tip will disappear at the slightest jar or noise and immediate digging operations must be put into action. A circular hole about two feet in diameter is hurriedly dug

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around the spot where the geyser was noticed. The sand is banked in a dam-like fashion to prevent water from entering the hole, then rapid digging straight downward for about four feet usually corners the geoduck. Some little effort may even then be required to pry him loose from his habitat, for the combined weight of sand, water and the prey, is often deceiving. These giant clams alone weigh from 5 to 8 pounds, and in some sections of the Peninsula, as much as 12 pounds.

Many "amateur" hunters become confused between the similarity of the "horse" clam and the geoduck, both of which disport in the Puget Sound area, and both are edible. But once you have partaken of a geoduck feed, all attempts to induce you to eat another type of the clam family will be scorned.

After the daily limit of 3 "ducks" to a person has been secured, the "chef" of the party, generally some lady who knows her clams, immerses the marine pelecypods into a kettle of boiling water. Upon removal from this scalding, the soft shell is cut away, the innards removed and a thin layer of skin encrusting the "duck" is easily scraped off. The meat is then cut into thin slices, rolled in an egg-and-bread crumb batter and fried in deep fat.

Anticipation that the "limit" is always to be had, provision is made by the remainder of the party to furnish the necessary "trimmings" such as potato chips, olives, pickles, and a tartish relish.

The warm sandy beach o'er which is spread a linen cloth if you are fastidious, serves as the festive board; the azure blue sky of the Pacific Northwest provides the canopy; and the geoduck is the "piece de resistance"

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which forever after places you in the foremost rank as an epicurean.

(Description and habitat from description in Sunset Magazine, June 1939,
pp. 13, 14.)

