



**Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe**  
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## **First Light Oysters – Flavor to Savor**

### ***A Refreshing Delicacy Cultivated on Cape Cod by Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe***

Mashpee, MA – June 20, 2013 –The [Mashpee Wampanoag](#) tribe, known as “People of the First Light,” work in harmony with their vast local bounty of natural resources, having made their living from the land and the sea for thousands of years. In keeping with historic, cultural traditions as long-time inhabitants of Southeastern Massachusetts, the tribe is cultivating succulent oysters in the clear, cold waters of Popponesset Bay, located off the shore of Mashpee on Cape Cod.

Named after the Tribe, “First Light Oysters” are cultivated for the half-shell market at the Mashpee Wampanoags’ shellfish farm, in operation since 2009. With acres of conservation land bordering the bay, the oysters reflect the clean, distinct taste of the sea unique to Cape Cod. “First Light Oysters” deliver a culinary sensation – just what you’d expect from the “pearls” of Popponesset Bay.

Oysters offer a distinct flavor from their area of cultivation, and chefs and culinary aficionados alike are no stranger to “First Light Oysters.” In blind taste tests, “First Light Oysters” have consistently received rave reviews.

Among their fans is world-renowned chef - and Southeastern Massachusetts native - Emeril Lagasse. In a recent interview in [Mashpee Magazine](#), Lagasse said “Mashpee oysters are so delicious – my favorite way to enjoy them is raw. Their small size and bright, briny flavor make them perfect for serving right off the shell. No cocktail sauce needed!”

“The Mashpee Wampanoag inherently honor and respect nature and the life that springs from the land and the sea,” said Cedric Cromwell, Chairman of the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe. “It’s a natural fit for us to farm the sub-tidal lands we have long inhabited, and to produce food that’s clean, healthy, and good for the environment at the same time.”

The tribe’s “First Light Oysters” spawn in their natural habitat, multiplying within the Bay. The “First Light” culturing method involves having oysters “sit” in trays on intertidal flats, moored to the sandy bottom of the bay. This process both allows the oysters to develop naturally, and nurtures them to grow with consistent shape and a natural cleanliness of the interior and exterior of each shell.

Beginning life as a two-millimeter oyster seed, “First Light Oysters” are cultivated by the tribe through their growth cycle. Once they measure three inches in length, the oysters are then harvested and examined for quality, appearance, and cleanliness to ensure they maintain a classic teardrop shape.

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Grown with pride by the Mashpee Wampanoag, "First Light Oysters" are distributed to select wholesalers for sale to premium seafood markets and fine restaurants in the metro Boston and New York regions. Thus the distinctive taste of Mashpee is brought to the dinner table, while an even brighter future is brought to the People of the First Light.

Among many establishments serving "First Light Oysters," they can be tasted locally at Coonamessett Farm in East Falmouth, Sea Crest Beach Hotel in Falmouth, Island Creek Oyster Bar in Boston, and can be found in New York City at Aquagrill Restaurant.

The cultivation and sale of "First Light Oysters" also provides jobs for tribal members, including labor-intensive work in the field and at the tribe's shop. Part of the tribe's EPA Environmental Merit Award-winning Popponesset Bay Restoration Project, the shellfish farm was initiated by Quan Tobey and Chuckie Green of the tribe's Natural Resource Department. The tribe's respect and understanding of the delicate balance of the eco-system has allowed them to maintain and manage the wildlife on which they depend, and their ecological awareness and regard for environmental sustainability have produced a viable tribal enterprise. Supported by the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Council, the oyster farm has been funded for the past two years by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Tribal Wildlife grant program.

**About the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe:**

The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, known as the People of the First Light, has inhabited present day Massachusetts for more than 12,000 years. After an arduous 30+ year process, the Mashpee Wampanoag were re-acknowledged as a federally recognized tribe in 2007 and retain full tribal sovereignty rights. There are approximately 2,600 enrolled citizens of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe.

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