

So Just How Much did the Oil Spill Devastate the Shrimp Market?

by John Rizzo

There is no doubt that the gulf oil spill has impacted the shrimp market worldwide. But what does it mean to the average family who occasionally enjoys a shrimp dinner at home?

Only 7% of the overall shrimp consumed in the US is fished from the Gulf of Mexico. Most of our shrimp is imported from Asia, Mexico and South America. Although Gulf shrimp are generally excellent in quality, there are several sources of shrimp of equal or better quality in the global market.

There was an immediate spike in wholesale prices after the gulf disaster, which will often trickle into the retail market. Like every other commodity, when there is a threat of a shortage or higher demand, the speculation itself may create a false shortage and immediately drive up prices. We see this over and over again with gasoline and this is part of the case with shrimp too. Large companies like Red Lobster immediately locked into yearlong contracts with shrimp suppliers which had a negative impact on prices.

Now, with all that said, I'm going to tell you that there is no reason to stop purchasing shrimp for home and it won't send you to the poor house should you indulge. Much of the retail shrimp has increased 10-20% since the oil spill. What does that mean to the consumer? Keep in mind, 4 oz of cleaned shrimp is the standard shrimp portion recognized by most reputable groups. Personally, I would prepare 5-6 ounces per person, but that's me. If the average price of peeled and deveined shrimp before the spill was \$6.00/pound (this would have varied depending upon the size and origin of the shrimp as well as the retailer) and it increased 15% to \$6.90/pound; it would have only increased your portion by \$.22 and a family of four by \$.88; hardly a reason to remove it from your menu.

So don't be fooled by the media hype and the speculators; shrimp is still a reasonable protein with unlimited recipes to please all.

Grilled Cajun Shrimp

Yield: 4

Shrimp, Peeled and Deveined	1 Lb.	Black Pepper	2 tsp.
		Cayenne Pepper	2 tsp.
Oil	1/4 Cup	Oregano	1/2 tsp.
Garlic Powder	1 tsp.	Salt	1/2 tsp.
Onion Powder	1 tsp.	Paprika	1 tsp.

In a medium mixing bowl, combine all ingredients except the shrimp. Add the shrimp and coat completely; refrigerate for one hour before grilling.

The shrimp can be skewered or cooked loosely on the grill. If you are using wooden skewers, soak them in water for an hour before placing the shrimp on them.

Cook the shrimp hot and fast. Preheat the grill on high or slightly lower (around 450° F); place marinated skewered shrimp directly on the rack and cook for approximately 3 minutes on each side or until the shrimp are solid white throughout. If you do not skewer the shrimp; I would recommend placing them on foil and poking a few holes through it to help flavor the shrimp. Serve with warm drawn butter for dipping.