

Proposal for New OYSTER Emoji

Submitter: Fred Benenson ([Emoji Dick](#) and [How to Speak Emoji](#))

Date: March 31st 2018



Image Credit: Brad Ellis / available under a [CC0 Public Domain Dedication](#)¹

Abstract

This proposal is to request inclusion of a new emoji as a Unicode character: OYSTER emoji. Oysters are common food items across all cuisines and cultures. This proposal represents a unique opportunity to broaden the set of food emojis by including a universally well known and well loved delicacy.

¹ [Brad Ellis](#) (a fellow oyster enthusiast) created this image specifically for this proposal but the proposer encourages any software vendor to use it in their platform as it has been released into the public domain under the CC0 dedication.

Introduction

The oyster is a staple of human cuisines around the world, and oyster [middens](#) are some of the best evidence we have of early human civilizations depending on local diets.

Today, oysters are enjoyed as local delicacies in almost every country with coasts – they are hearty creatures that can survive in polluted water and provide valuable filtering for ecosystems. They provide a renewable source of protein at low environmental cost, and run the gamut in terms of culinary appeal – everything from fast food fish shacks to the most sophisticated restaurants offer them on their menu.

Several usages, meanings and idioms exist around oysters:

- Oysters & champagne: decadent seafood related celebration
- “The world is your oyster” - Shakespeare

Adding OYSTER to the Unicode emoji set would unquestionably contribute to our shared visual language. It's inclusion represents an opportunity to highlight and celebrate a unique culinary item that is shared by virtually every civilization.

Names

CLDR Short Name: Oyster

CLDR Keywords: Oyster, mollusk, half-shell, shellfish

Selection Factors: Inclusion

Compatibility

This is a new emoji for inclusion in Unicode and then other systems. It will contribute to the various phrases and usages defined below.

Currently the Line app (see below) has an Oyster emoji in the form of a sticker, and Facebook has offered “Sinister Oyster” stickers since 2014.

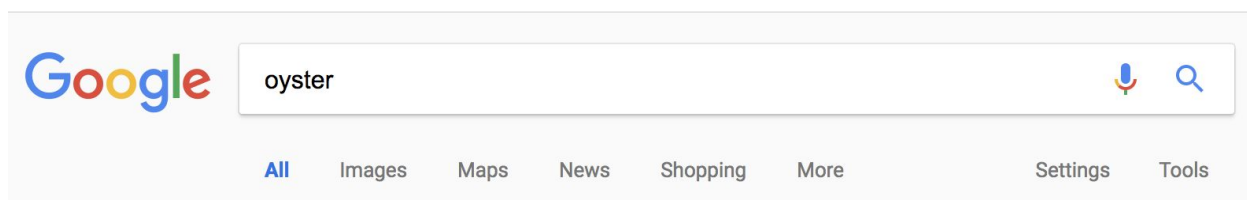
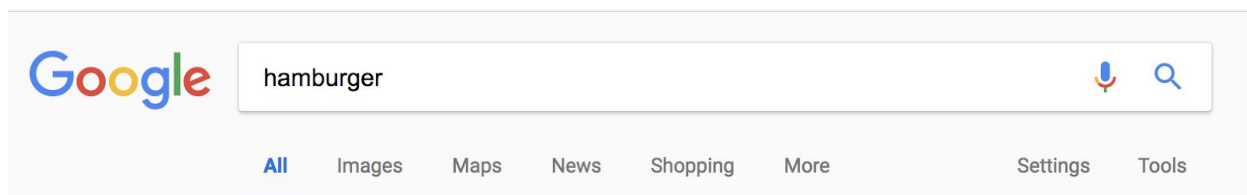
Expected Usage Level

Evidence of Frequency

It's the proposer's expectation that the oyster emoji will have high and widespread global use.

The results for “oyster” compared to “hamburger” across are as follows: Google (31.5 vs. 48.2 million), Bing (34.5 vs. 39.3 million), YouTube (1.84 vs. 3.93 million), Google Trends (~75 out of 100) and Google Trends Image Search (~75 out of 100).

Google Web Search



Bing



- All
- Images
- Videos
- Maps
- News
- Shop
- |
- My saves

34,500,000 Results Any time ▾



- All
- Images
- Videos
- Maps
- News
- Shop
- |
- My saves

10-23 Of 39,300,000 Results Any time ▾

YouTube



YouTube



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Trending



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History

About 1,840,000 results



The Right Way to Eat Oysters - Stop Eating it Wrong, Episode 8

ZAGAT 951K views · 2 years ago

What's the right amount of cocktail sauce to add? Do you use a fork? The Mermaid Inn chef Michael Cressotti shows us the right way



YouTube



Home



Trending



Subscriptions

LIBRARY



History

About 3,930,000 results



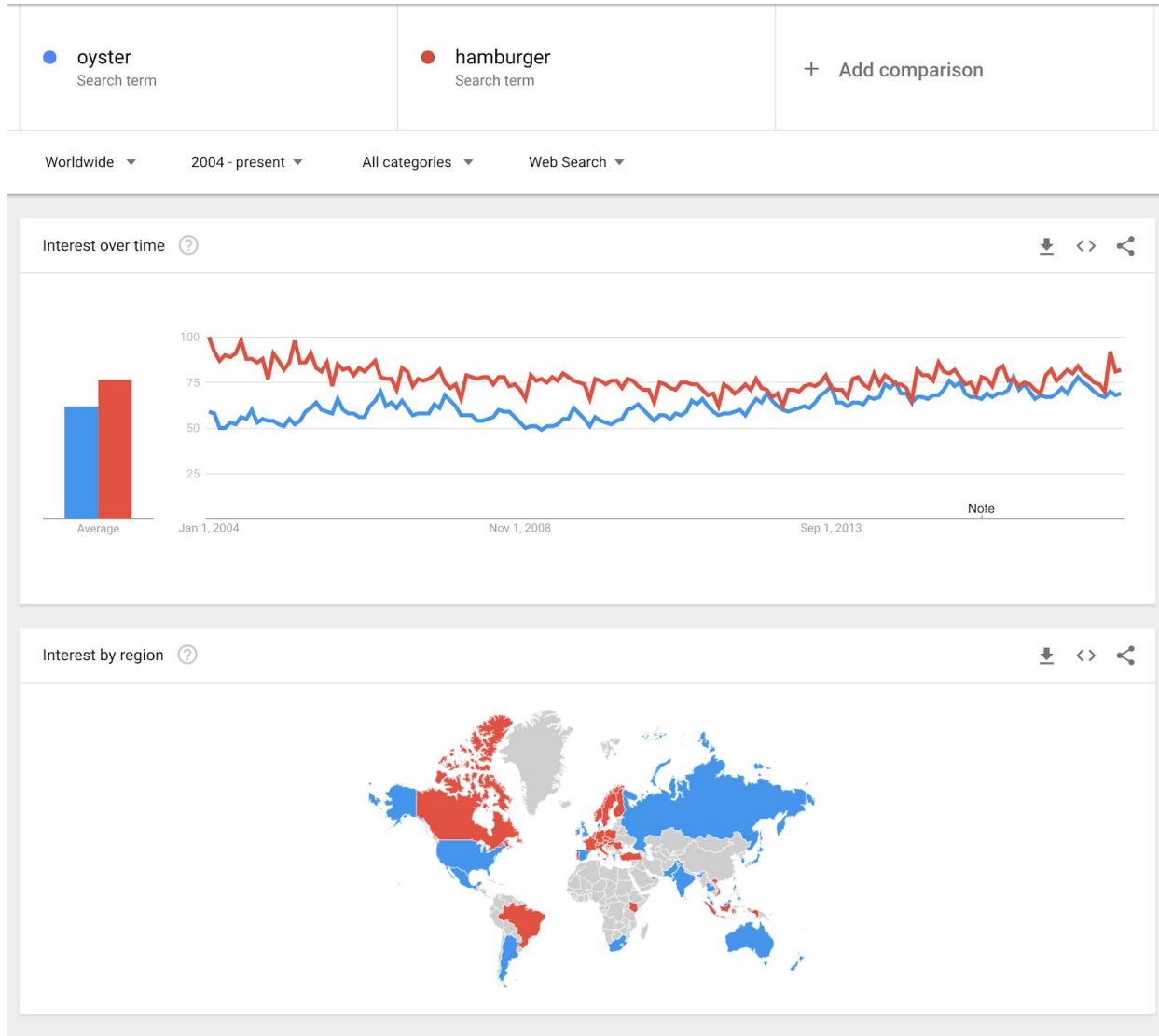
Gordon Ramsay's perfect burger tutorial

Good Morning America 15M views · 10 months ago

Here's your guide to making the perfect burger from the 'Master Chef' Chef himself, Gordon Ramsay. SUBSCRIBE to GMA > [https://](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCG301UwUdEgdMwW8n8G888g)

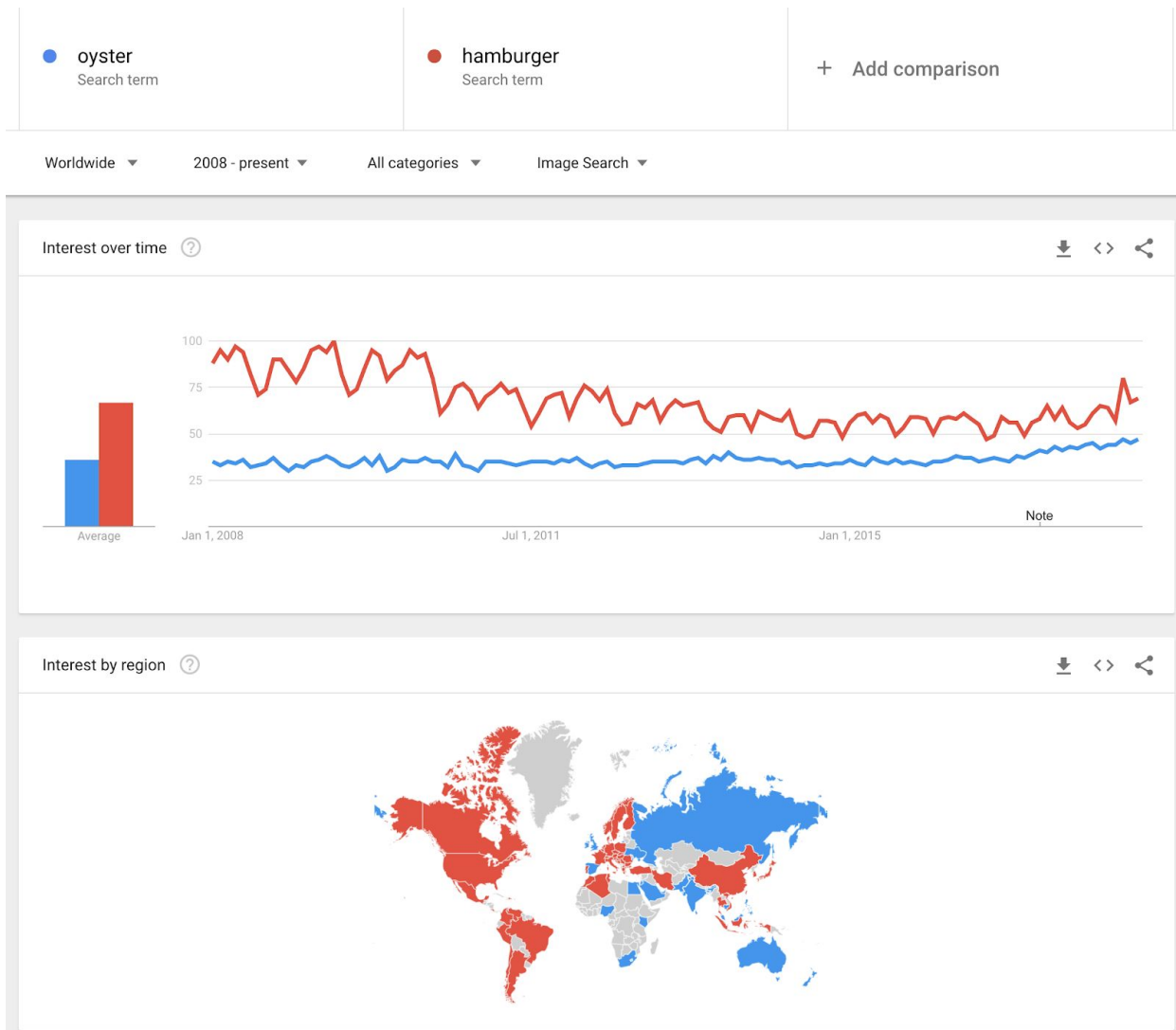
Google Trends (Web Search)

Compared to the reference emoji of “hamburger” Oyster does notably well, and having closed a gap in 2013, now has just slightly less interest over time:



Google Trends (Image Search)

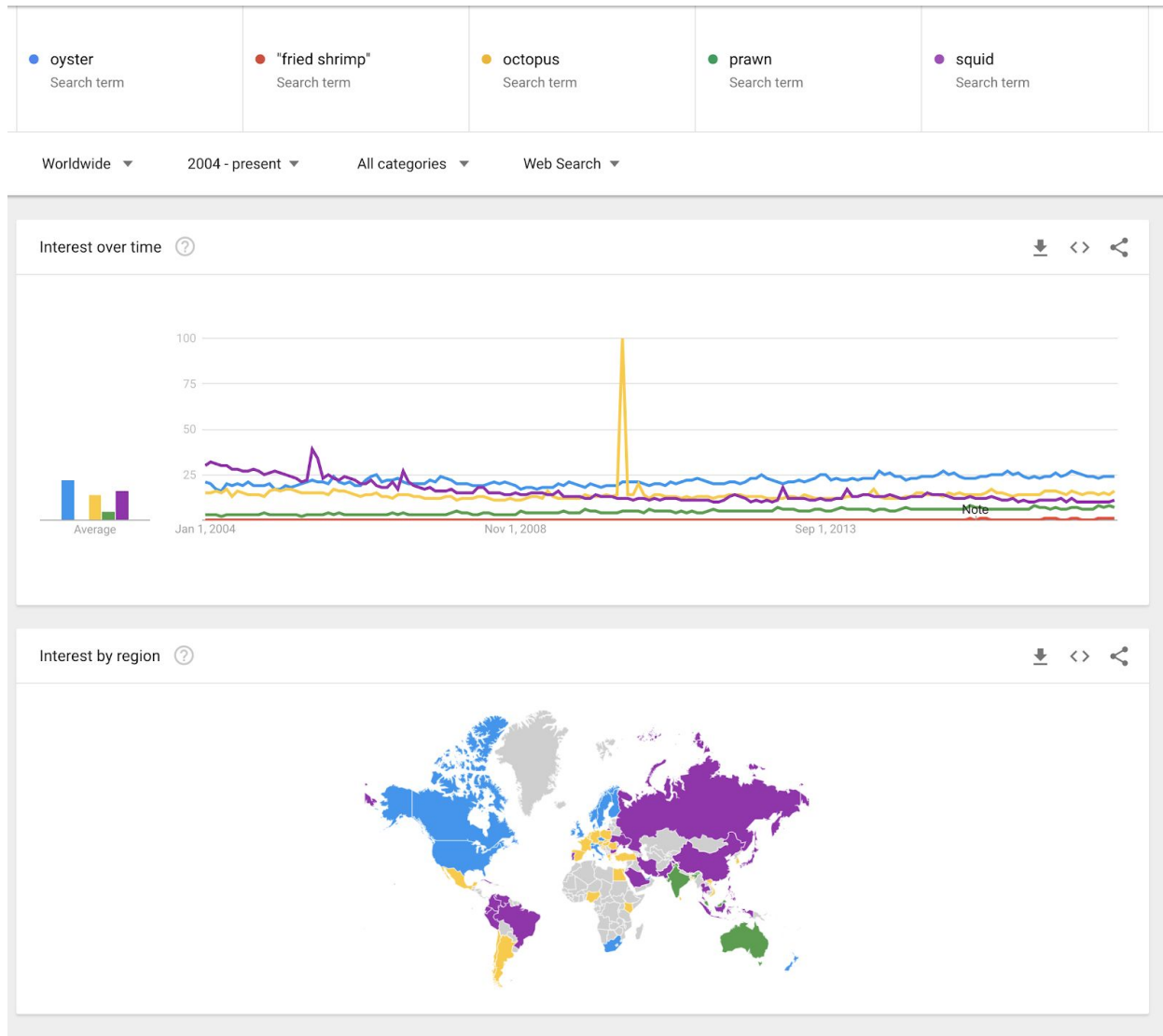
While Google Image searches for hamburgers still occur more frequently, searches for “oyster” are trending upwards and appear to be closing the gap:



Oysters have seen gradual increase in interest over the last decades, but their relative high interest in the UK is likely due to focus around the Oyster metrocard in the UK.

It is worth noting, however, that oyster ranks well in non-US countries such as South Africa, Singapore and Australia.

Comparatively speaking, Oyster has been trending far better than other search terms such as “fried shrimp”, octopus², prawn, and squid – all shellfish that already have their own emoji:



As can be seen from the Frequently Requested section below, people are using the phrase “oyster emoji” typed in full on social networks like Twitter and would certainly use the emoji if available.

² With the exception of a 2009 spike for the term “octopus” which is likely correlated with the release of the monster film “Mega Shark Versus Giant Octopus”

Multiple Usages

Aside from the obvious literal interpretations (as food items), oysters can be used in a number of contexts:

- Oysters have been scientifically established as aphrodisiacs and thus have light sexual connotations
- Oysters are ugly things that make something beautiful (pearls)
- Oyster mushroom (a delectable culinary treat in its own right, easily derived with the mushroom emoji)
- Mother of Pearl and Oyster White (popular paint colors)
- Oyster card in UK
- A prairie oyster (or prairie cocktail) is a drink consisting of a raw egg, Worcestershire sauce, tomato juice, vinegar, hot sauce, salt and ground black pepper. The drink is typically served as a hangover cure.
- Rocky Mountain oysters: food made from animal testicles
- “As dumb as an oyster”

Use in Sequences

The oyster emoji is a singular item and will work effectively by itself (i.e., it does not need any ZWJ modifiers).

Image Distinctiveness

Due to its unique shell formation, the oyster emoji is a highly distinctive visual symbol which will be recognizable by virtually any owner of a smartphone.

Completeness

This will continue build out commonplace and daily items in the Nature part of emoji. It is not a direct part of a series such as Zodiac symbols.

Frequently Requested

In a 2015 article, Emoji LINE, a brand publisher, posted a BuzzFeed article with the a subtitle “The world is your [oyster emoji]” despite not having an official Unicode oyster emoji:



These Are The 31 Emoji You Should Be Using Right Now

The world is your [oyster emoji].

Posted on June 18, 2015, at 3:23 p.m.

Line does, however, include an oyster emoji in their in-app set:

9. The Oyster Emoji



Use it to say: "I can do anything."

Facebook has a “Sinister Oyster” sticker set published in 2014³:

21 Reasons Facebook's Sinister Oysters Are The Best Thing On The Internet

No other emoticon understands how socially awkward you can be.

Posted on October 31, 2014, at 8:02 a.m.



Flo Perry
BuzzFeed Staff, UK



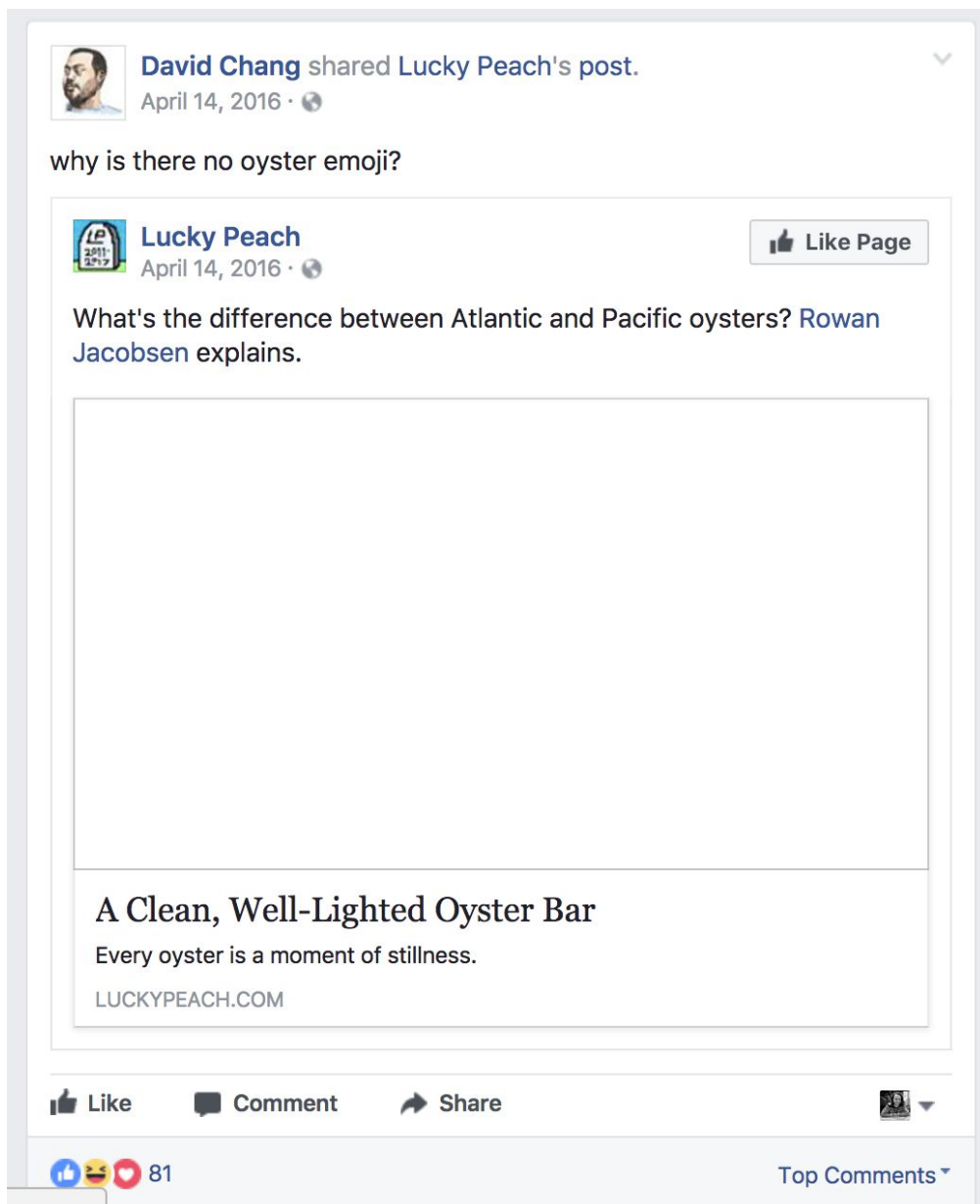
If you haven't discovered sinister oysters yet then you are missing out. They are the only Facebook sticker that can say what words can't.



Facebook / Flo Perry / BuzzFeed


³ https://www.buzzfeed.com/floperry/sinister-oysters?utm_term=.umwa7kZdN#.rr9R2Mpaw

In 2016, famous New York chef David Chang asked “Why is there no oyster emoji?” when linking to an article in his magazine Lucky Peach:

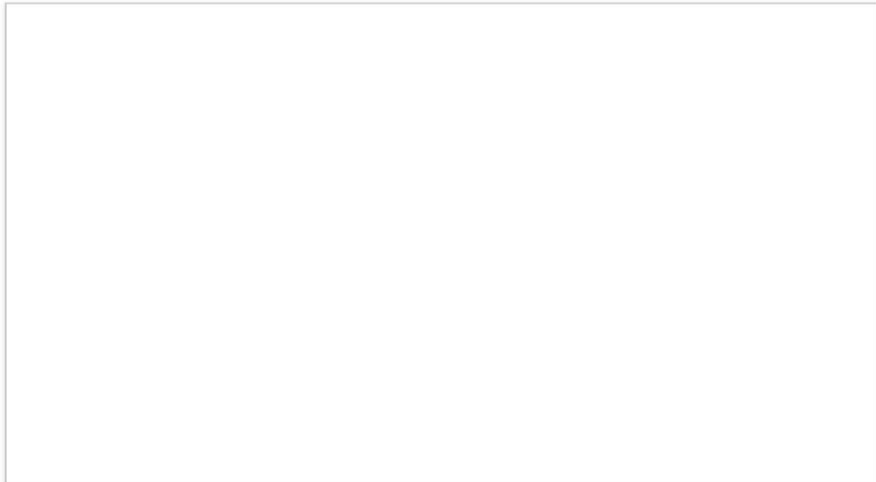


David Chang shared Lucky Peach's post.
April 14, 2016 · 🌐

why is there no oyster emoji?

 **Lucky Peach**
April 14, 2016 · 🌐 Like Page

What's the difference between Atlantic and Pacific oysters? Rowan Jacobsen explains.



A Clean, Well-Lighted Oyster Bar
Every oyster is a moment of stillness.
LUCKYPEACH.COM


Like Comment Share

👍 😄 🍷 81 Top Comments

In addition, many people frequently request an “oyster emoji” on Twitter:


Axelle @samtyrells · Mar 24
no guillotine emoji no oyster emoji im being oppressed

Slow Food SF @SlowfoodSF · Mar 23
Do you love oysters?? 🦪🦪🦪 Us too!! (Where's the oyster emoji???) 📅📅📅 Join us for an Oyster Welcome Party next month - included in your #slowfish2018 attendee ticket! eventbrite.com/e/slow-food-sa...



Stud Muffin Matt @Matt_Monge93 · Mar 21
Dear @AppleSupport : since @Apple hasn't tweeted in forever, I figured I'd come to you for guidance. As grateful as I am for the Taco and Burrito emoji, @gennarellit_ and I would greatly appreciate it if you could make an Oyster emoji. Thank you for your consideration.

Nation Hahn @NationHahn · Mar 21
Sunny Side Oyster Bar. (Why do we not have an oyster emoji?)
Thx for the reminder, @baxmiller. - at Sunny Side Oyster Bar



flith @ambientmp3 · Feb 20
Replying to @grubsludge
🦪 where's the oyster emoji

Basket Island Oyster @BasketsOysters · Feb 18
Oyster emoji is next!

Senator Angus King @SenAngusKing
Great news for Maine - we're getting a lobster emoji!!! Thanks to @unicode for recognizing the impact of this critical crustacean, in Maine and across the country...

Beth Darrow @DarrowE · Feb 12
Replying to @gulfseafoodgirl @OysterSouth @EdmundsOast
But really, we need an oyster emoji. Can you get on that? 😊

Meredith Deliso @themerryness · Feb 8
I'm still waiting for an oyster emoji eater.com/pop-culture/20... via @Eater



The Bagel Emoji Is Finally on Its Way
Lobster, salt, and moon cake are also coming to an Android or iPhone near you
eater.com

Daniel Hyszcak @hyszcak10 · Jan 30
(insert oyster emoji) @ Union Sushi + Barbeque Bar
[instagram.com/p/Bel86BxhBCu/](https://www.instagram.com/p/Bel86BxhBCu/)

chaotic good!lucy @lucyamorris · Jan 29
SO don't worry, taking a single job doesn't lock you into a certain path. Rather it upsills you for many paths! The world is your 🦪! (there was no oyster emoji)

adea @adea_pristine · Jan 28
Theres no oyster emoji but god dammit there should be

Dr Agnes Arnold-Forster @agnesjuliet · Jan 27
Replying to @charlietaverner
Keyboard - I need an oyster emoji!

Counterarguments to Factors for Exclusion

Overly Specific

The oyster emoji is not overly specific and can be used in a number of contexts through its use in numerous phrases, ideas, and concepts.

It can be used to represent food (oysters), as an analogy (beauty in nature, rarity), or as an metaphor (“The world is your oyster.”)

Open Ended

The oyster is not just one of many items within a set; it is distinct and doesn’t open up a direct open-ended set of related symbols.

Already Representable

The oyster emoji cannot be easily representable given current emoji. The closest option to an oyster emoji might be 🌀 (Spiral Shell Emoji) but neither can properly substitute for a food item.

Transient

Oysters are not transient symbols in culture, and oysters have been part of human diets since the dawn of time.

Logos, brands, UI icons, signage, specific people, deities

The oyster emoji has only coincidental associations with any specific logos, brands, UI, icons, signage, people or deities. The only realistic comparison might be to the Oyster Card in the UK, but this is likely to increase its usage – since the Oyster Card is commonplace in civic life in London.

Generally, oysters are commonplace items that are universally recognizable and unlikely to be associated with any particular stigma or brand.

Faulty Comparison

The submission for the oyster emoji is one made on its own merits; in line with the Unicode selection factors for inclusion (above) and that it avoids the factors for exclusion (also above).

No case is made that the oyster emoji should be included due to other emojis; emoji patterns; or due to comparison to others.

Sort location

Category

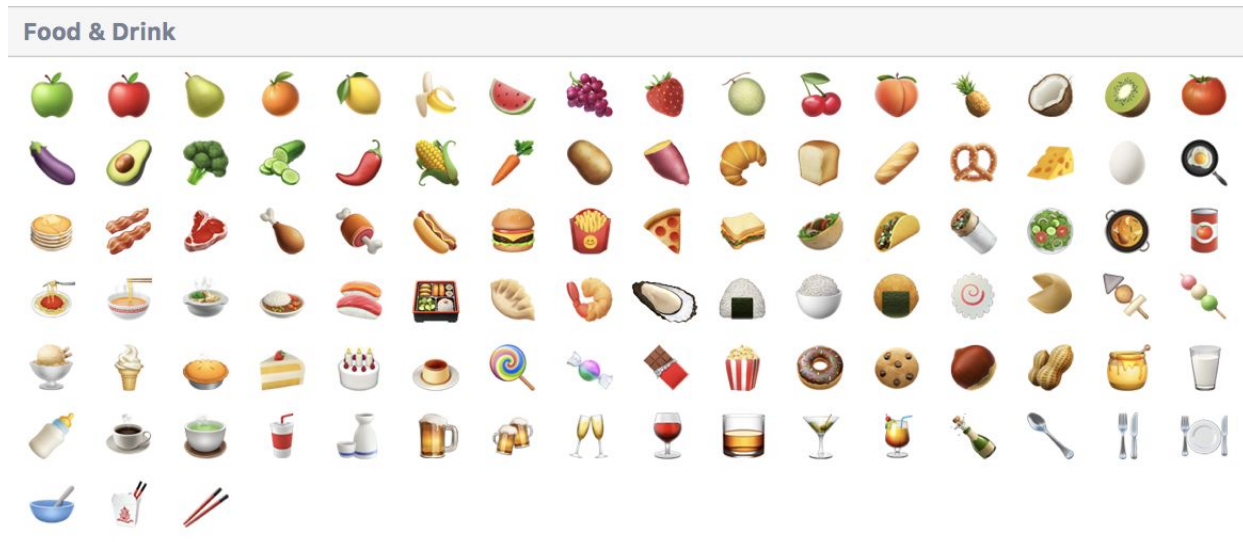
The proposer suggests the oyster emoji be inserted next to the Food & Drink category.

Emoji Before

Ideally the oyster emoji would appear next to the fried shrimp emoji.

In Situ

Here is the emoji placed next to “fried shrimp” emoji in macOS’s emoji chooser:



Other Information

Resubmitting A Year Later

Since proposer's previous proposal for OYSTER WITH PEARL⁴, proposer has received significant interest in the opportunity to create an oyster emoji.

In a show of support, an organization proposer is a board member on wrote a piece titled "Reconsider the Oyster"⁵. In it, Lauren Studebaker makes the argument that:

The oyster emoji's appearance reflects the emergence of a population of new urban creatives that are building a shared visual culture through digital conviviality...

In an unsolicited letter an engineer named Deryck Chan wrote to proposer noting that the oyster featured in my past submission was actually a pearl clam, not a food oyster:

"Oyster" emoji submission



Deryck Chan <deryckchan@cantab.net>

10/2/17 ★



to fcb ▾

Dear Mr. Benenson,

I read your public submission for an "oyster" emoji with great interest.

<http://www.unicode.org/L2/L2017/17269-oyster-with-pearl.pdf>

However, I believe your submission has conflated two very different uses of the human language concept of an "oyster". The submission proposes to use a single emoji to represent both a "pearl-producing shell" and a "food oyster". A comparison between the graphic you provided in page 1 of your submission and the LINE oyster emoji shows significant differences; your submission is actually a pearl clam, not an oyster.

I believe oyster enthusiasts around the world would greatly appreciate if you would revise your submission into a submission for a pearl clam using the graphic you have currently proposed, and a new food oyster emoji based on e.g. the LINE oyster emoji.

Best regards,

Deryck Chan

Department of Engineering, University of Cambridge, U.K.

(Personal food blog here: <https://www.instagram.com/deryckchan/>)

(Work website here: <https://www-geo.eng.cam.ac.uk/directory/deryck-chan>)

This friendly correction is a good indication that there is ambient awareness and demand for OYSTER emoji and that it's time has come.

⁴ <https://www.unicode.org/L2/L2017/17269-oyster-with-pearl.pdf>

⁵ <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2017/nov/22/reconsider-the-oyster/>

Oysters are Not Clams

It is important, as Deryck Chan pointed out, that the OYSTER emoji not be confused with clam or any other mollusk.

Particular attention should be paid to the shape of the shell, and as it is a food item, it should be open and look appealing to eat.

Proposer

Fred Benenson

fc@fredbenenson.com

In 2010 Fred published *Emoji Dick*, a emoji translation of Herman Melville's classic *Moby Dick*. In 2013, the book became the first emoji book acquired by the Library of Congress. He is also the author of "How to Speak Emoji" published by Ebury Press, a Penguin / Randomhouse UK imprint.