

# The Catch

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## The World is Your Oyster

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Aliya Uteuova

## **The world is your oyster**

*What does it mean to make the world your own?*

What does this phrase mean? I've wondered I've tried an oyster for the first time last summer.

As with many foreign words and sayings, at first I didn't understand what an oyster had to do with my world. And why oyster? Why not a scallop, or a chestnut? Both have shells that have to be cracked open. So now I'm on a quest to understand what is it about oysters that make them so special.

The proverb first appeared in Shakespeare's play 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' published in 1602. In Act II, a character named Falstaff says: "I will not lend thee a penny," to which Pistol replied: "Why, then, the world's mine oyster, Which I with sword will open."

The Oxford dictionary gave the following explanation to this phrase: "You are in a position to take the opportunities that life has to offer."

You can look at this phrase from different angles. On the one hand, this phrase could mean that we, as humans, are blessed with natural resources. We are wealthy and we should be happy with what we have. You might grab an oyster, think of it as a source of food, and if you're lucky, you might get a pearl with it. On the other hand, does this phrase encourage us to take what we want? Is Pistol greedy, or merely opportunistic? Some might say both.

And how can the world be your oyster if someone else took care of that oyster, harvested it, loved it — for you?

The process of growing an oyster nowadays is more thought out, with no room for free-fall. Sure, wild oysters from Shakespeare's time still exist, but they aren't always edible due to

pollution and harmful algae blooms. Therefore, in order to ensure safety, you should probably opt for oyster fisheries, where people specialize in growing oysters for profit.

I have often thought that the inverse of that phrase has applied to my life- for me, the oyster is my world,” Barb Scully, the founder of the Glidden Point Oyster Farms, said. “Starting a home based aquaculture business in Maine in the late 1980s was quite a risk. But even more risky was when I quit my real job as a scientist with the state of maine department of marine resources to jump into my business full time. I had two very young children at the time, so trusting myself with providing all of the income for my entire family based solely on my own hard work and business decisions was a lot to take on. What it essentially meant, was that the oyster became my world, and that of my children as well.”

To Dana Morse, also an oyster farmer, this phrase means that opportunities await for those people who take advantage of them and make opportunities for that to happen. “To take the bull by the horns,” Morse said using a yet another interesting idiom.

It can take two to three years for an oyster to get from the river to your hand, for you to gulp that slimy, salty taste of the ocean. The oyster’s rough, rock-hard shell is nearly impossible to open without a proper shucking knife, although a sword might do as well. The gray, unattractive body is delicious and beautiful to those who understand the worth of this calcium and iron rich protein.

The way I see this phrase “the world is your oyster,” is that the the world is only as big as you are. It can only get as big as you want it to, as you imagine it to. And you are a pivotal part of it, the world can only go on and operate with you in it.

When I was a child, all I wanted to do was to grow up and understand this big world. Somehow I thought that all I needed to do to understand is be an adult. Yet I found that the more I grow up, the bigger and more complicated the world around me gets. We don’t magically learn the world around us when we become adults. It gets more complex, more messed up. Yet it also gets more colorful, more exciting, more vivid.

The more an oyster grows, the bigger its shell gets. The world can be as big as you allow it to be, and it can only grow with you in it.