Meat, Poultry, Fish and Seafood Safety Restaurant: Safety Fatality File

Man dies after eating raw oyster at seafood restaurant

A customer at a restaurant in Florida has died after eating a raw oyster found to be contaminated with a bacteria known as vibrio vulnificus.

The man, who has not been named but is said to be from South Florida, had visited the popular Rustic Inn Crabhouse in Fort Lauderdale earlier this month and was one of many customers that day to order the oysters.

He ended up being the only customer who got sick, having to be hospitalised before he passed away.

Gary Oreal, manager of the Rustic Inn, said the customer had worked at the restaurant about two decades ago before coming back to dine there.

The Rustic Inn has signs in the venue and on menus warning diners that eating raw shellfish may increase the risk of food-borne illness, with Oreal describing the dish as ‘top of the mountain for dangerous foods to eat’.

“I have eaten them my entire life and will continue. But you are putting yourself at risk when you do it,” he added.

The oysters now being served at the restaurant are from Louisiana, Oreal said, adding: “If there was a problem with the oyster bed, we would know it because others would have gotten sick.”

He added: “Over the course of 60 years, we have served a couple billion oysters, and we never had anyone get sick like this guy

did.”

The Florida Department of Health website reveals there have been 26 cases of people being infected with vibrio vulnificus after eating raw shellfish in 2022. Six of the people who became ill later died.

Just last week, another man from Pensacola died after contracting the bacteria from oysters.