

OH, SHUCKS!

Oyster shucker Becky Wasden cuts her own path in New Orleans

BY MEGAN HILL PHOTO BY ROMERO & ROMERO

In a field dominated by men, Becky Wasden is working to turn the oyster industry on its shell.

Wasden and her partner in life and business, Stefani Sell, launched their oyster-shucking business two years ago after spending nearly a year shucking casually at backyard parties. One evening, a friend piped up.

“He came to the table and said ‘You girls shucking oysters, why don’t you have a tip jar,’” Wasden says.

At the time, Wasden was busy finishing her Master of Education. Originally from Salt Lake City, Wasden admits seafood hasn’t always been her specialty. She taught art and music for six years in New Orleans after visiting in 2001, when she “instantly fell in love” with the city.

Wasden learned as she shucked and the duo started the company, Two Girls One Shuck, in 2014. She gave up teaching full time.

“I miss the kids, but I don’t miss the politics of being in a school,” she says.

Two Girls One Shuck is a roving oyster bar, specializing in both raw and chargrilled oysters. They’ve catered birthday parties, weddings, TV sets and other events and parties.

Most of the oysters Wasden shucks are harvested in St. Bernard Parish; others come from Bayou La Batre, Alabama and prime beds on the east and west coasts.

Wasden says she aims to be an ambassador for Gulf oysters and hopes to educate the public about growing methods and subtle flavor variations that come with growing oysters in different regions — a concept similar to terroir in wine-grape growing. Oyster-shucking classes are in the works, too.

“It’s so much fun to watch an adult pop their first oyster and just snack,” she says. “An oyster will never taste the same.” ♦

Favorite New Orleans Restaurant: High Hat Cafe

Favorite Live Music Venue: Old U.S. Mint (Third Floor)

Favorite New Orleans Visual Artist: Tony Nozero

Becky Wasden was asked to shuck oysters behind the scenes during the filming of HGTV’s “Brothers Take New Orleans,” a four-part series airing this month starring twins Jonathan and Drew Scott of the popular show “Property Brothers.” Wasden also shucked and served oysters at the show’s wrap party.

