

# Definitions starting with C: Conch

Conchs are very abundant in the warm seas around the Bahamas. They are gastropods with foot-long shells resembling those of snails, and they have always been one of the Bahamians' favorite foods. The loyalist refugees who came from the American mainland in the 1780's called the natives [CONCHS](#) for this predilection, and [CONCHY JOE](#) is still a very current term for a white Bahamian. The variety preferred for food is the [PINK CONCH](#), while [KING](#), [QUEEN](#), and [LAMB CONCHS](#) are collected for their beautiful shells, used to decorate everything from lamp bases to walls. The flaring pink lip of such conch shells is cut to make cameos and other jewelry. Other varieties include the [COURAGE CONCH](#), [HORSE CONCH](#), [LIME CONCH](#), [PEPPER CONCH](#), [PORGIE CONCH](#), [REEF CONCH](#), [SCREW CONCH](#) and [TWIST CONCH](#); there is also the [BROAD-LIP](#) or [THICK-LIP](#) conch as opposed to the [THIN-LIP](#). Old discolored, worm-eaten ones are called [HAG](#) or [SAMBO](#) conchs.

Bahamians [DIVE](#) conch or [HOOK](#) conch with the [GRAINS](#); they must be kept alive if they are to be eaten, so they are either kept in a [CRAWL](#) in shallow water or tied together with several others until needed. To extract the edible creature from its hard shell, the tip of the spiral is chipped off with a [CONCH-BREAKER](#) (or [CHOPPER](#)); then with one hand one grasps the [HORN](#) (or [CONCH-EYE](#), [CAP](#), [HELMET](#) or [SPUR](#)) while the creature is [JOOKED](#) out with a knife. The [BUSBY](#) (or [DUG](#)) and [SLOP](#) are cut off, after which the conch can be eaten raw either [SCORCHED](#) and sprinkled with lime juice, or diced and mixed with hot peppers in [CONCH SALAD](#). It can also be tenderized with [BRUISER](#) and fried for [CRACK CONCH](#), or cooked as [STEAM CONCH](#) or chowder (see Burrows 1979). Deep-fried conch [FRITTERS](#) are favored at parties and church cook-outs; they are famed for reviving exhausted Junkanooers as dawn lends Nassau more sober tones. Before refrigeration, conchs were frequently preserved by drying. Some Bahamians still do this, preferring the stronger flavor over that of fresh conch for [OKRA SOUP](#) and other stewed dishes. The Live animals are hung up while still in their shells; when dead, they are removed from their shells, [BRUISED](#), rinsed in salt water, then hung to dry in the hot sun for several weeks. Before it can be eaten, this [BAHAMA HAM](#) (also called [HURRICANE HAM](#) from its use in emergencies) must be soaked for a day or so and boiled at least an hour. With the tip of its spiral removed, the [CONCH-SHELL](#) (or [BLOW-CONCH](#)) serves as a horn for signaling, a use that goes back many centuries. The length of time that conchs have been put to gastronomic use is suggested by the mountain of empty shells that had accumulated in Nassau harbor before it was recently used as landfill.

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