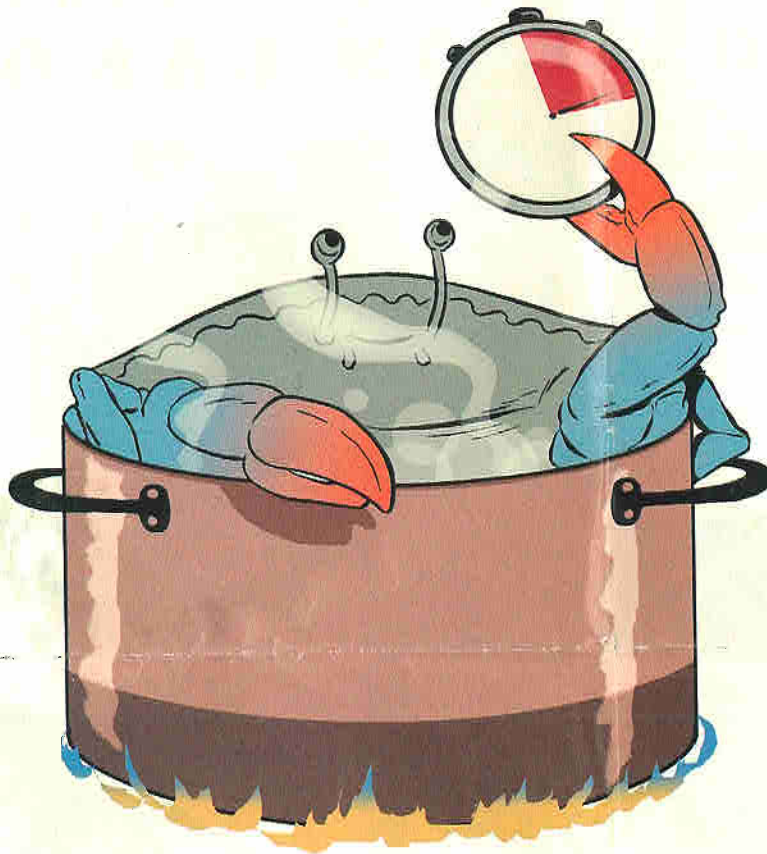




# THE PERFECT CRAB

Crab cookery in seven easy steps



**W**e're just coming into the best three months for crabs. You need a licence, you need identification on your gear, and you need to know size limits. And then you need to know about cooking crabs, which most of us don't. Crab bought ready shucked in fish stores is overcooked because overcooking makes it come out of the shell more easily.

If you really want to taste crab at its best, you need to go to a good Chinese restaurant, where it will be brought to the table, legs wriggling furiously, for your initial approval, and then disappear to the kitchen. About five minutes later it will come back to the table, cooked and ready to eat. The meat will be firm and much whiter than fish store crab, and maybe for the first time in your life you'll

experience the essential taste of fresh crab. The very best crab in Vancouver is at the Green Village, on Nanaimo at Broadway—I suggest you order crab and crispy rice.

But there are ways of improving (indeed almost perfecting) your crab cooking, and at the same time not wasting so much of the meat as you used to.

1. First of all, don't overcook it. Twelve minutes is the absolute maximum, and then leave it for 10 minutes to get cool enough to handle.

2. Cook the whole crab. Don't tear it apart and cook it in pieces, or pull off the shell and throw it away. The shell is full of lovely and flavourful juices that add a whole new dimension to your catch.

3. You don't need an enormous pot filled with boiling water. Steaming is better than boiling, particularly if you

steam it in something flavourful. So take your pot with a lid, pour in a bottle of beer or cider, add a bay leaf, a couple of slices of orange peel, maybe a clove of garlic and a thin-sliced onion. Put the crab in the cold beer, put the lid on, bring it to a boil and cook 10 minutes (12 if it's a very big one). Let sit 10 minutes and then clean it, saving the cooking juices.

4. To clean, pull off the legs and turn the body upside down. Lift the body out of the shell by putting your thumb under the apron at the back. The only part of the crab that's not edible are the gills, which are grey and spongy and shaped like skinny fingers. Throw these out (even the cat won't eat them). The shell will have orangey juices in it, which you tip into a cup, and it will also be lined with a thin layer of orange-yellow fat, which you carefully scrape out (a spoon works best) and put in the cup with the juices. There will be more of this orange-yellow fat on the body—scrape it off and put it also with the juices.

5. Crack the claws with nutcrackers, cut the body vertically into four slices and put it with the claws. That's the meat.

6. Now the best bit—the stuff in the cup. Add a heaped tablespoon of breadcrumbs, two tablespoons of mayonnaise, a squeeze of lemon juice and a sprinkle of cayenne pepper, then stir vigorously with a fork until it's all smooth. Spread it on crackers, use it as a dip for the meat in the legs, or use it as a salad dressing with a bit of lettuce or sliced tomatoes. Absolutely delicious.

7. The juices in the pot? Add all or some of the following: onion, tomato, garlic, cubed potatoes, carrots and enough water to make enough soup for two. Simmer. Again, delicious. 🍴

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