

PULL OUT ONLY



Coming to Grips with a Crab

CONSUMER SERIES

Pansy Bray and Steve Harbell

You're bigger than they are!

Dungeness crabs may be fierce-looking creatures, but that shouldn't deter you from enjoying these delicious shellfish native to Washington waters. Dealing with them is simple, once you have mastered a few techniques:

Whole Dungeness crabs can be purchased live ("green") or cooked ("red"), and crabmeat is available fresh, frozen, and canned. The amount of meat in a whole crab varies, naturally, depending on the size of the animal; but the average yield of meat will be about 20 to 25 percent of the whole weight. You can use this average yield to determine whether whole crab or crabmeat is a better buy on any given occasion.

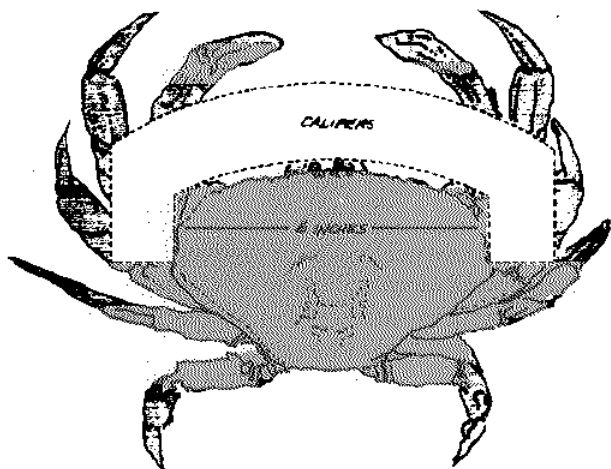
You may want to try catching your own crabs. Incidentally, there is no need to be concerned about paralytic shellfish poisoning (often called "red tide") since it does not affect crabs. To obtain tips on how and where to catch crabs, along with a copy of the current issue of "Sport Fishing Regulations—Salmon, Shellfish, and Other Foodfish," contact the Washington Department of Fisheries, General Administration Building, Room 115, Olympia, WA 98504, or your local Department of Fisheries Office.

Washington State sport catch regulations limit the harvest of Dungeness crabs (*Cancer magister*) to male crabs that measure a minimum of 6 inches horizontally across the back, directly in front of the widest points. (In some areas, the minimum is 6 1/4 inches.)

You can use the pattern on the back cover of this leaflet to make a pair of calipers for accurately measuring crabs. Calipers can be cut from wood, metal, stiff plastic, or other sturdy material.

Live crabs that are kept cool and moist will remain alive for several days. Keep them out of water, at a temperature of about 35°F, in a container covered with a damp cloth.

CIRCULATING COPY
Sea Grant Depository



Marine Advisory Services
Washington Sea Grant Program
3716 Brooklyn Ave. N. E.
Seattle, Washington 98105
(206) 543 - 6600



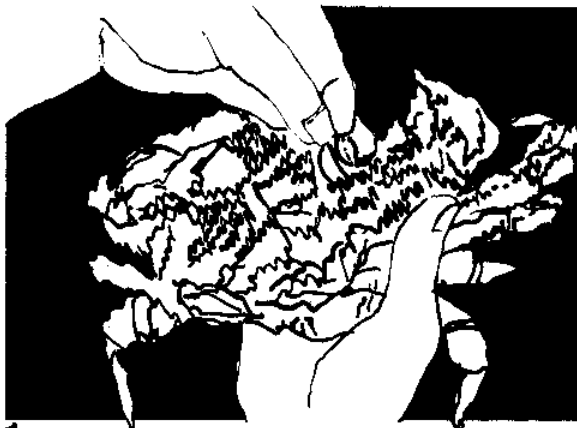
Quit crabbing—on to the cleaning

Crabs may be cooked whole—with the back on—or cleaned—with the back and viscera removed. Crabs that are cooked whole (live) taste different from crabs that are first cleaned and then cooked. Try both methods to see which you prefer.

To clean a live crab, grasp the legs firmly and bring the crab down swiftly—abdomen first—over a solid object such as the edge of a sturdy box or the center of a divided sink. This will kill the crab instantly, will remove the back, and will split the crab in two. An alternative method is to lay the crab on its back and split the body with a sharp knife.

Discard the back, the belly flap, the mouth parts, and the gray featherlike gills. Wash away the viscera under a stream of cold water (Figure 1). The cleaned crab halves are now ready to be cooked.

To clean a whole, cooked crab, first grasp the legs firmly with one hand, and with the other hand, pull off the back (Figure 2). Pull off the belly flap, the mouth parts, and the gray featherlike gills; and discard these, along with the back. Wash away the viscera under a stream of cold water. Then break the crab in half and you are ready to shake the meat.



1



2

Pop 'em in a pot

It is best to cook crabs live or immediately after they are killed and cleaned. Fresh crabs that have been dead for only a few hours and have been kept cold (near 35°F) to minimize spoilage can also be used.

Fill a deep kettle with water up to 6 inches from the rim. You'll need this margin to prevent messy boilovers. Adding salt to the water is not necessary, but it adds flavor, as do other seasonings like garlic, bay leaves, Creole spices, etc. About 1/4 cup of salt may be added per gallon of water.

Bring the water to a rolling boil and add the whole crabs or crab halves. Don't put more crabs into the kettle than will be covered by the water.

Cook whole crabs 15 to 20 minutes and cleaned crab halves 12 to 15 minutes. Cooking times should begin when the water resumes boiling.

Remove crabs from the kettle with tongs.

Crabs are delicious hot, but if you don't plan to eat them right away, it is important to cool them quickly in cold water for about 10 minutes. If you wish, you may salt the water lightly.

Never put hot crabs into a refrigerator to cool. The crabs won't cool fast enough to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria, and their odor will spread to other foods.

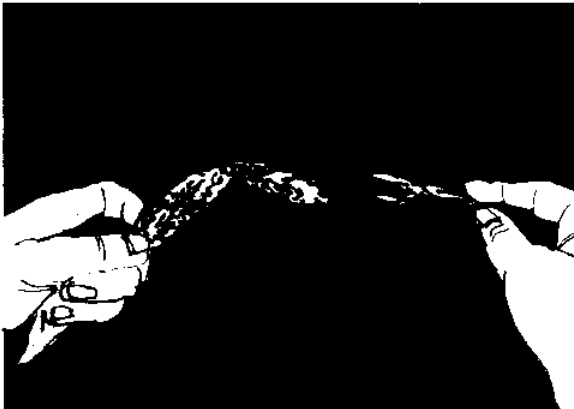
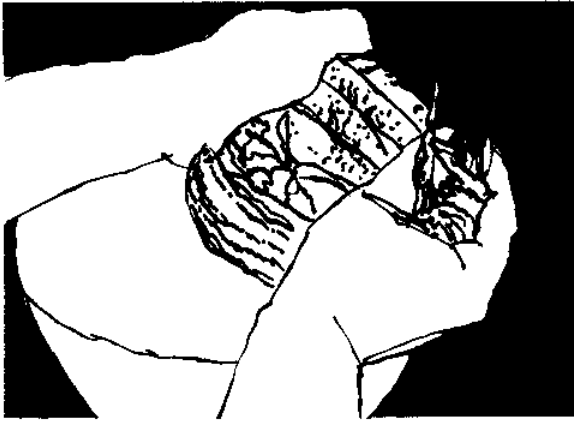
Take 'em and shake 'em

To shake crab out of its shell, the pros use an aluminum crab block and mallet. At home, you can use a short 6-inch section of 2x4 lumber covered with aluminum foil, the middle of a double sink, or the edge of your sink for a block. The handle of a chisel or large screwdriver will serve as a mallet. The meat will fall out more easily if you shake the crabs right after cooking and cooling.

To shake the body meat, grasp half a crab in one hand with your thumb folded over the underside of the legs. Then squeeze the body section with the other hand to break up the cartilage (Figure 3).

Remove any loose pieces of cartilage. Sharply rap the body section over a heavy bowl or sturdy container. Most of the meat will then fall out (Figure 4). Tear away cartilage as necessary to shake out the rest of the meat.

To shake the leg meat, first separate the legs. Then the trick to extracting whole sections of leg meat is to pull out the cartilage filaments that extend from one section of a leg into the next. To do this, start at the tip section and work up to the largest section. Grasp a leg, with the top side up, in one



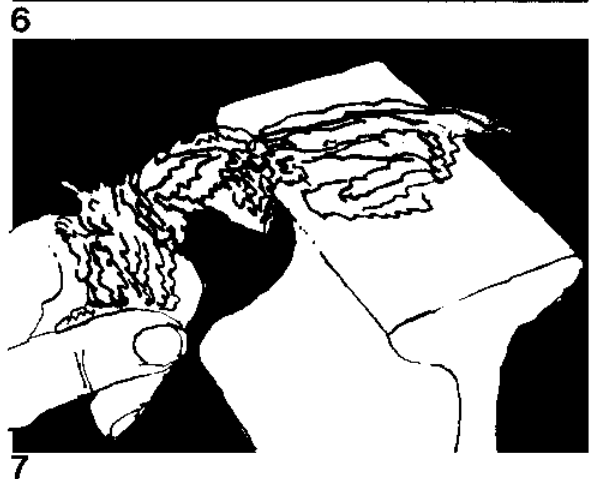
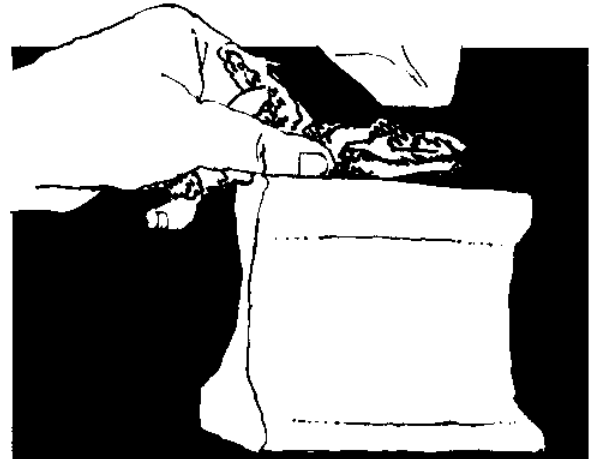
5 hand. Then, with the other hand, pull up and out on the tip section (Figure 5). Notice the filaments that are pulled out of the next section. Lay the first meat section, top side up, over the crab block. Strike the section with a quick flick of the mallet to crack the shell, but not crush it. Now rap the leg over the bowl and watch the meat fall out.

Pinching the tip of the second section, twist and pull the empty first section and the filaments away from the second section. When you rap the second section over the bowl, the meat should fall out.

Pull the second section up and out to free the shell and the third section filaments. Lay the third section on the crab block and then strike it quickly with the mallet to split the shell (Figure 6). Shake out the meat. You may have to tear away bits of shell or strike the shell more than once to extract some of the meat.

To clean the claw, pull the movable half of the pincer up and out—just as if it were a tip section. Then lay the claw on the crab block and strike it quickly (Figure 7). Remove bits of broken shell and shake out the meat.

Now lay the knuckle section on the block and strike it. Pull away broken shell and filaments from the knuckle and shake out the meat. Lay the end section on the block and strike it. Tear away the empty knuckle and filaments from this section. Then shake out the meat.





On to the eating!

Now comes the best part - eating! For cracked crab, serve the crab already cracked in the shell. To prepare crab in other ways, try the intriguing recipes provided here.

Make a delicious hot appetizer...

Crab 'n Crackers

*1 cup flaked crabmeat
1/2 cup sour cream
1/4 cup mayonnaise
1/4 cup cream cheese
1 tablespoon horseradish*

Combine all ingredients in an oven-proof dish. Heat in a 350°F oven for 15 minutes. Serve hot as a dip for crackers or as a spread for buttered bread rounds. Makes 2 cups of dip.

Marinate crab in the shell...

Cordova Crab

*4 Dungeness crabs
2 cups salad oil
1 cup vinegar
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 tablespoon soy sauce
1 tablespoon chopped parsley
4 cloves garlic, finely crushed
1 large onion*

Clean the crabs. Separate the body and leg sections. Crack legs to allow marinade to flavor the meat. Place crabs in a deep bowl.

Mix other ingredients and pour marinade over the crabs. Use a basting tube to pour the sauce over the crabs for several minutes.

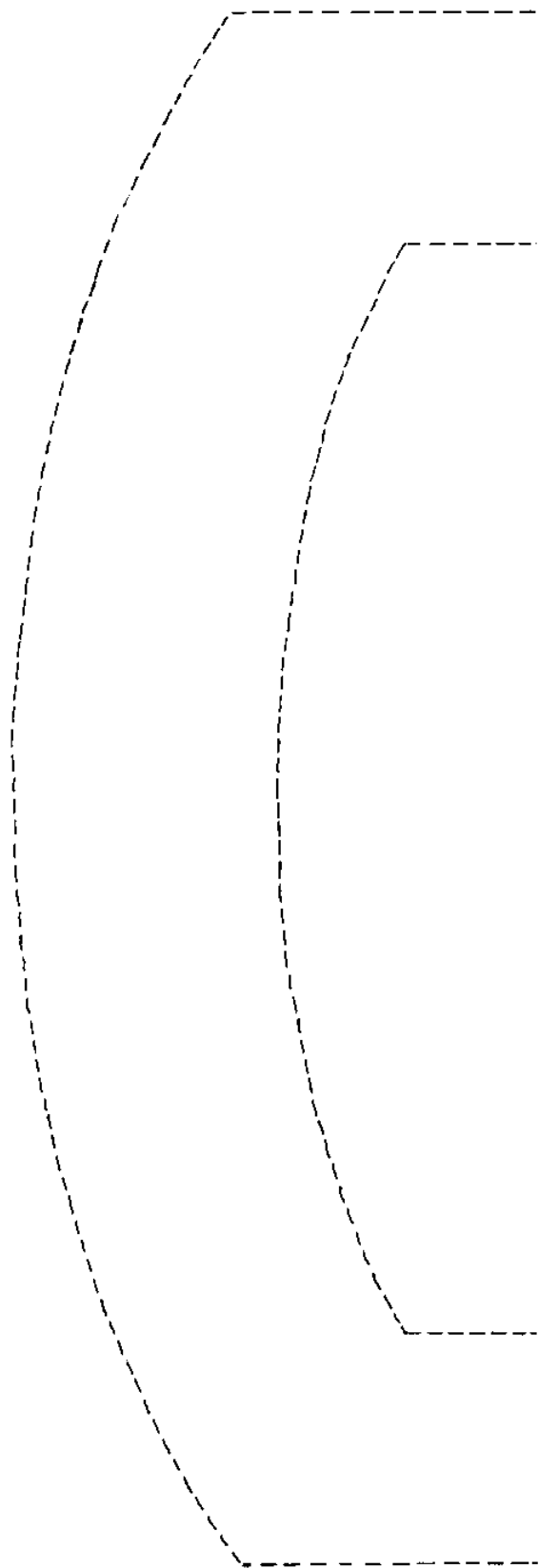
Cover the bowl and refrigerate. Every half hour for 4 hours, repeat the basting process. Serve cold, as an appetizer or an entree. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

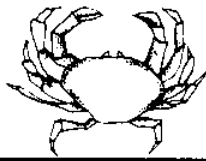
Fresh crab in a salad...

Crab Louis

Arrange crabmeat on top of your favorite green salad. Top with Louis Sauce.

*Louis Sauce
1 cup mayonnaise
1/4 cup chili sauce
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
2 tablespoons minced onion
2 tablespoons chopped green pepper
2 tablespoons minced parsley
Season to taste*





Make a mouth-watering entrée...

Crab St. Jacques

*1/2 cup mushrooms, sliced
2 tablespoons onion, finely minced
1 tablespoon polyunsaturated margarine
2 teaspoons cornstarch
1/2 cup skim milk
1 tablespoon dry white wine
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1/8 teaspoon white pepper
8 ounces crabmeat
1 ounce part-skim mozzarella cheese, grated
bread crumbs*

Sauté mushrooms and onions in margarine. Blend in cornstarch. Add milk, wine, and lemon juice. Cook on medium heat, stirring constantly, until thickened and smooth. Blend in seasonings. Add crab and heat through. Divide between two scallop shells or individual au gratin dishes. Sprinkle bread crumbs and mozzarella cheese over casseroles. Broil 3 to 5 inches from heat, 3 to 4 minutes, or until lightly browned. Serve with fruit plate and whole wheat roll. Makes 2 servings.

*(From: *Seafood: A Collection of Heart-Healthy Recipes*, by Janis Harsila, R.D., and Evie Hansen)*

About the Authors

Pansy Bray, a seafood consultant, lives in Hoquiam, WA, where she writes a regular seafood column for several coastal Washington papers. She appears frequently on television and in cooking school demonstrations on seafood preparation. She is a consumer advisor to the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

Steve Harbell is a marine extension field agent with Washington Sea Grant Marine Advisory Services. He works out of their Coast Office in Montesano, Washington, helping people to solve marine-related problems. He has conducted a variety of workshops for consumers on the care and preparation of seafood.

Single copies of this publication are free.
Bulk copy rates are available upon request from:

Washington Sea Grant
3716 Brooklyn Ave. N.E.
Seattle, WA 98105

Marine Advisory Services
Washington Sea Grant Program
3716 Brooklyn Ave. N. E.
Seattle, Washington 98105

WSG AS 87 - 2
April 1987

NOV 23 1987

RECEIVED
NOV 23 1987