

Preparing whole Dungeness crab at home

Cooking

- Place live crab in boiling, salted water. When water begins to reboil, cook for 18-20 minutes.
- The crab will change color to a bright orange/red when it's done.
- Immerse crab in cold water to cool before cleaning.
- If you're not eating the crab right away, refrigerate your whole-cooked crab until ready to eat.

Cleaning

- To remove back, hold base of crab with one hand, place thumb under shell at mid-point, and pull off the shell.
- The leaf-like gills will be exposed. Gently scrape them away with thumb or a spoon edge.
- Wash away the "crab butter" (the viscera, which is the semi-liquid substance in the body cavity) under a heavy stream of cold water.

Cracking

- Twist off each leg (including the two large legs with claws) where they join the body. Break off small pincer and discard.
- Break large claws in two and crack with a nut cracker. Or place on a cutting board and give a light whack with a mallet or small hammer. Most purists consider this the choicest meat in the entire crab.
- Crack next two joints of the largest legs with nutcracker or mallet, and remove meat.
- Repeat cracking procedure on top two joints of rest of legs.
- Smaller joints of legs can be snapped with fingers and meat either sucked out, or removed with pick or fork.
- Grasp main body of crab with two hands and firmly snap in two. Place each section on cutting board and strike with mallet to break small "bones" and loosen meat. Or use your fingers to separate and remove meat. A pick or cocktail fork comes in handy here, too.

Serving

- Fresh whole Dungeness crab can be served chilled, or can be heated in a steamer, broiler or oven for 4 to 5 minutes.
- Serve with melted butter or dipping sauce.