

A Guide for Crab Lovers

Wine & Dine with Dave Preston...

The Guru of the Goodlife®

With most of my adult life spent in the Bay Area and my very early years living in San Francisco, I remember going to Fisherman's Wharf at 5:00a.m. to meet the crab boats and get my pick! And back then, it was \$1.25 a pound fresh and live from the crabbers! My good friend Chef Clint Jolley at Butcher Boy in Sparks told me they're fresh, fair sized and running about \$3.99 a pound. Most of us in these parts think of the Dungeness crab from off the California coast. And while they are still there – I told by old San Francisco restaurateurs the harvest is getting weaker each year – the Pacific Northwest is its real home.

The Dungeness Crab or *Cancer magister* gets its common name from the town of Dungeness, Washington, now called Old Town Dungeness, where the first commercial harvesting of the crab was done. The Dungeness Crab is the only commercially important crab in the state of Washington's territorial waters and was the first shellfish harvested commercially on the North Pacific Coast. When comes to eating this glorious repast, I love them boiled with butter. Here's the How To:

Cleaning To clean the crab, remove the back, break the crab in two, shake out the viscera, and remove the gill filaments.(they'll do it at the meat counter if you ask)

Cooking Crabs are cooked by boiling in salted water. Crabs are generally either placed live into the boiling pot or killed just prior to cooking. Do not use crabs that have been dead for more than a couple of hours without being cooked. Use 1/4 cup salt per quart of water. Bring the water to a boil. Introduce the crabs and return to a boil. Boil for about 20 minutes.

Serving Serve chilled or warm with melted butter.

Now, if you're looking for something more elegant and with many layers of flavor, I found this recipe on a trip to Napa and grabbed it for just such an occasion. This would be very impressive to guest during the New Year, *Dungeness Crab with Vanilla Aioli and Gypsy Pepper Confit*

Gypsy Pepper Confit:

4 Gypsy Peppers, or small red bell peppers
4 tbl. olive oil
4 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
1 tsp. coriander seed, crushed
salt and pepper to taste

Vanilla Aioli:

1/2 garlic clove, peeled and crushed
3 egg yolks
10oz. grape seed or canola oil
1 vanilla bean
1/2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
salt to taste

Crab Salad:

2 lbs fresh Dungeness Crab meat

2 tbl. minced fresh chives
12 leaves fresh arugula
1 tbl. extra virgin olive oil

Directions:

Preparation for Gypsy Pepper Confit:

Place the peppers and 2 tbls. of the olive oil in a mixing bowl and toss to coat the peppers. Season with salt and pepper. Cook the peppers over a hot grill until the skin blisters and begins to char. Transfer the peppers to a mixing bowl, cover with plastic and allow the peppers to cool to room temperature. Carefully clean away the charred skin and remove the seeds from the inside of the pepper. Once the peppers are cleaned, lay them flat on a nonstick baking pan. Sprinkle with the crushed garlic, coriander seeds, remaining olive oil, and salt and pepper. Place in an oven set at the lowest setting (175 degrees) for 30 minutes, or until the edges of the peppers begin to dry. Remove from the oven and let sit at room temperature.

Preparation for Vanilla Aioli:

With a small knife cut the vanilla bean in half lengthwise. Scrape out the seeds and reserve for later. Place the vanilla bean shell in a small saucepot along with the grape seed oil. Place the pot over low heat and gently warm the oil until fragrant, about 10 minutes. Remove the pot from the heat and let cool to room temperature. Once cool, remove the vanilla bean shell and discard. Put the egg yolks and the garlic in the cup of a blender running; slowly add the vanilla infused oil to the egg yolks until all of the oil is incorporated. Transfer the aioli to a small mixing bowl and whisk in the reserved vanilla bean seeds and lemon juice. Season to taste with salt.

To Finish:

Place the crab meat in a mixing bowl, along with the chives and the vanilla aioli. Gently mix. Place 1 piece of Gypsy Pepper Confit in the center of a chilled salad plate. Carefully place a mound of crab salad in the center of the pepper, and garnish with a few whole leaves of arugula and a drizzle of olive oil. (Serves 4) A wonderful, oakie chardonnay works well, a *Wend-Tyler* is a suggestion or I like the Grenache-style wines like *Norman's Vino Rosado* – both available at Whispering Vine at Mayberry Landing in Reno. *Bon* appetite! *Carpe Diem* my friends and make it a point to go out and live the goodlife!