



# Cooking with crab

10 recipes

by chefs, restaurateurs  
and professional cooks from  
around the UK celebrating  
great British crab, introduced by

**Mark Hix**

# foreword

The thought of tackling a whole crab is quite off putting for some but I can think of nothing better than sitting by the seaside with a glass of crisp white wine or cider, armed with crackers and tucking into to a freshly cooked crab with mayo. Crabs are quite abundant along our coastline. I even have some crab pots myself that I use in Lyme Regis near my restaurant. Spider crabs and green crabs are also underrated in this country and are a delicious alternative, although they haven't got as much meat as a brown crab their flesh is sweet and tasty. To get more value out of the crab, once can make a soup (or bisque) out of the shells once it has been eaten. The shells from a 1kg crab can make enough soup for 6 people. The recipe below, from my latest cookbook, is one of my favourite ways to enjoy spider crab. Perfect as a brunch or breakfast dish, by simply serving with a fried duck's egg and foraged seasonal sea vegetables, which lets the ingredients speak for themselves...



## Fried duck's egg with spider crab and sea greens

by Mark Hix

## Serves 4

### Ingredients

- 4 duck eggs
- 3-4 tablespoons of rapeseed oil
- A few handfuls of wild sea vegetables like samphire, sea purslane, small sea beet leaves (if you haven't got foraging tendencies you should be able to buy samphire in season)
- 1 small to medium spider crab, cooked
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- A couple of good knobs of butter  
*(you can replace with potted shrimps to add another twist to the recipe)*

1. Remove the brown meat from the spider crab body shell then crack the claws and quarter the inner body shell and remove as much white meat as possible. Blend the brown meat in a liquidiser with a couple tablespoons of the rapeseed oil until smooth. It should be a runny spooning consistency, if not add a little water.
2. Trim the sea vegetables of any woody stalks and give them a good wash. Bring a pan of water to the boil and blanch the sea vegetables for about 30 seconds then drain. Heat the butter in a pan and toss in the sea vegetables and white meat and lightly season.
3. Meanwhile lightly fry the eggs in the rapeseed oil and lightly season the whites. Transfer the eggs on to warmed serving plates, scatter the sea vegetables and crab over the egg white and spoon a little of the brown meat mixture around.

Duck egg with  
Spider Crab

© Mark Hix, "HIX Oyster and Chop House"  
published by Quadrille



# Introduction

With their sideways walk, pincers and hard shell crabs are probably the most iconic of shellfish. More than 40 types of crab can be found in our seas but the three most commonly eaten are the brown crab, the spider crab and the smaller velvet swimming crab.

Brown, or edible, crabs are instantly recognisable by their 'pie-crust' edge to their shell, their brown colouring and large claws with black pincers. They can reach a foot across and contain delicate white meat in the claws and legs and succulent rich brown meat in the shell.

The aptly named spider crabs are smaller than brown crabs and have long skinny legs and small claws. They have been a popular dish on the continent for many years. Increasingly spider crabs are available here in Britain where they are gaining in popularity in restaurants and with seafood lovers.

Velvet swimming crabs, as their name suggests, have a brown-velvet appearance and are equipped with a rear set of paddle-like legs to help them swim. They are the smallest of the three but you can eat just about all the meat in a velvet.

Many of the recipes in this booklet are using either spider or brown crab, so it is worth experimenting to determine your favourite! Dressing a crab may appear daunting at first but it is a rewarding effort.

The photographs of the dishes were not provided by the chefs and restaurants who donated their recipe, but by an amateur cook to demonstrate that the enclosed recipes are simple to realise.

We very much hope that you too will enjoy cooking with crab.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Pickerell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Dr Tom Pickerell**  
**Director,**  
**The Shellfish Association**  
**of Great Britain.**

A close-up photograph of a white ceramic bowl filled with a thick, yellowish-orange soup. The soup has a creamy, slightly grainy texture and is garnished with finely chopped green herbs and small pieces of orange crab. A single breadcrumb crumb is perched on the right edge of the bowl. The background is dark and out of focus.

# Potted Brown Crab

*by Mitch Tonks*



**Serves 2**

**Ingredients**

- 250g fresh brown crab meat
- 150g fresh white crab meat
- Splash of Cognac
- 1 tsp ground fennel seeds
- 1 dried chilli, *crumbled*
- 100g *melted* butter
- Fennel fronds  
*(the leafy part at the top of the fennel)*
- Juice and zest of half a lemon

1. Start by melting the butter.
2. Stir in the crab meat, cognac, the fennel, lemon juice, chilli and zest.
3. Season to taste and then put the mix into ramekins.
4. Pour a little melted butter over the top, then sprinkle with fennel fronds.
5. Chill well and serve with toast.

© Mitch Tonks  
Fishmonger/restaurateur/food writer  
The Seahorse, Dartmouth

# Crab & Wensleydale tartlets

*by Brian Turner*







## Serves 4

### Ingredients

- 340g shortcrust pastry
- 1 egg white
- 230g fresh white crab meat  
*(I am using brown crab)*
- 50g fresh brown crab meat
- 2 egg yolks
- 3 tbsp double cream
- 1 pinch cayenne pepper
- 85g grated Wensleydale cheese
- Salt and pepper

1. Roll out the pastry and line 4 tartlet moulds.
2. Bake blind at 200°C for 15 minutes.
3. Take out and cool.
4. Brush inside with egg white and put back into the oven for 2 minutes.
5. Mix all ingredients and pour into the moulds.
6. Bake at 180°C for 15-20 minutes.



**Crab cakes**  
**with lemon garlic mayonnaise**  
*by Paul & Jeanne Rankin*

## Serves 4 – 6

### Ingredients

- 3 tbsp butter
- 2 tbsp red pepper, *diced*
- 4 tbsp spring onion, *finely sliced*
- 2 tbsp celery, *finely chopped*
- 200g fresh hake, whiting, or cod, boneless and skinned
- 450g fresh white crab meat  
(*you can use brown crab or spider crab*)
- 1 egg
- 1 tbsp chopped parsley
- 1 tbsp chopped basil
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 100g fresh breadcrumbs for the crab cakes mix
- 100g fresh breadcrumbs for the coating
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- Salt and pepper

### Lemon garlic mayonnaise

- 2 egg yolks
- 2 garlic cloves, finely sliced
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 lemon zest
- 1 or 2 tbsp lemon juice, to taste
- 120ml light olive oil
- 120ml vegetable oil

1. Melt one tablespoon of butter in a small pan, and sweat the peppers, onions, and celery until soft, for about 5 minutes. Allow to cool, and place in a bowl.
2. Purée the fresh fish in a food processor to a rough consistency.
3. Add the crab, egg, herbs, mustard, and breadcrumbs. Taste for seasoning, and add a little salt and pepper if necessary.
4. Roll the crab mixture into balls just a little larger than a golf ball, and dip in the remaining breadcrumbs.
5. Press them down lightly to form into little cakes.
6. Prepare the mayonnaise by combining the yolks, garlic, one tablespoon lemon juice, the lemon zest and salt in a food processor and blend for a few seconds.
7. Slowly add the oils in a steady stream until emulsified. Taste and adjust with lemon and salt if needed. Set aside.
8. Melt a tablespoon of butter with a little oil in a large frying pan. Sauté the crab cakes over moderate heat until nicely golden and heated right through. This will take about 3 – 4 minutes on each side.
9. Drain on paper towel, and serve with the lemon garlic mayonnaise.



**Dressed Crab**  
*by Phil Coulter*

## Serves 4

### Ingredients

- 4 small cooked brown crabs, 600/800g each. *(you can follow the same recipe using spider crab)*
- 4 hard boiled eggs
- 1 bunch chives
- Homemade mayonnaise

### Mayonnaise

- 2 egg yolks
- 2 tsp white wine vinegar
- 1 tsp English mustard
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 pinch black pepper
- 100ml olive oil
- 200ml vegetable oil

1. Crack and pick all white meat from claws and body, place on a clean plate\*.
2. Go through the meat to make sure there are no bits of shell, and divide into four equal piles.
3. Spoon out the brown meat from the shell into a bowl and mash with a fork.
4. Clean shells and break away any thin outer edges of the shell to form the serving dish.
5. Divide the white meat between the two sides of the shells and fill the middle with the brown meat.
6. Where the white and brown meat joins, sprinkle with finely chopped egg white, followed by a line of finely crumbled egg yolk and a line of chopped chives. Keep cool.
7. Prepare the mayonnaise by combining all the ingredients except oils in a bowl or food processor. Slowly whisk/blend in the oil (if it becomes too thick, add a teaspoon of water). When all the oil is incorporated, check seasoning and adjust.
8. Serve the dressed crabs with plenty of soda bread and mayonnaise.

\* To prepare your cooked crab, follow the step-by-step guide at the back of this booklet.

**Phil Coulter, Head Chef, Wright Brothers,  
Oyster and Porter House, London**



Crab, fennel and  
mushroom risotto

*by Stephen Pini*

## Serves 4

### Ingredients

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 300g arborio rice
- 1½ litre of hot chicken stock
- 125ml dry white wine
- 300g white crab meat  
*(you can use either brown or spider crab)*
- 1 small bunch of chives, *snipped*
- 200g bright white button mushrooms
- 8 baby leeks, *cut at an angle into 3cm pieces*
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

### To serve

- 1 tomato, deseeded and cut into dice
- 1 red pepper, cut into julienne  
*(very thin shreds)*

1. Heat the olive oil in a wide shallow pan.
2. Add the rice, stirring for a few minutes to coat the grains.
3. Pour in the wine and stir until absorbed.
4. Add the stock one ladleful at a time, stirring until each one is absorbed. Continue the process until the rice is tender and creamy.
5. Once the rice is cooked, gently stir in the crab, chives, mushrooms and leeks.
6. Season to taste.
7. Cook for a further 2 minutes.
8. Spoon the risotto into four large bowls and garnish with the diced tomato and julienne of red pepper.

**Stephen Pini**  
Executive Head Chef, Fishmongers' Company  
and author of *Simply! Fish*

A close-up photograph of a bowl of Spicy Velvet Swimmer Soup. The soup is served in a dark, rustic ceramic bowl. It features long, thin, light-colored egg noodles, several pieces of cooked crab, and various vegetables including sliced red chili, green leafy herbs, and pieces of leek. The background is a solid dark red color.

# Spicy Velvet Swimmer Soup

by Nick Fisher

Serves 4

## Ingredients

- 8-12 whole live velvet swimming crabs  
*(aim for about 3 per person)*
- 3 tsp of miso soup paste  
*(or fish stock cube)*
- 150g of medium dried egg noodles
- 1 leek trimmed and sliced
- 1 garlic clove sliced
- 1 red chilli sliced – seeds included
- 300-400g of mixed sliced fish  
*(pollack, gurnard, black bream, squid, mussels, clams, scallops, prawns – any combination will do)*
- 1 medium broccoli head separated into florets and each one halved
- Chopped coriander  
*(replace with parsley if preferred)*



1. Place the crabs in boiling water for five minutes. When cool enough to touch, split them lengthways with a stout knife.
  2. Strain a cup of the crab-boiling water to start the soup base. Make up about a litre of liquid in total, of either fish stock or miso soup by dissolving the paste.
  3. Put the liquid on a slow simmer in a heavy bottomed pan. Add the egg noodles and leeks.
  4. As the noodles soften and separate, add the broccoli. (If you are using mussels it is best to slip them in a minute before the broccoli. You can keep the mussels in their shells if they've been scrubbed.)
- You are about 3 minutes from serving and need to move fast to avoid overcooking the fish and green vegetables.*
5. Slide in your crab halves and fold the noodles over them.
  6. Gently lower in your fish pieces and shellfish, placing the heaviest ones first.
  7. Put on a tight fitting lid and take the pan off the heat to steam content.
  8. Pre-warm the serving bowls and have them ready with fresh coriander to hand.
  9. Leave the pan for three minutes, four at the most, to cook through.
  10. A minute before serving, add the chilli in the pan and place lid tightly back on.
  11. Divide equal portions of fish pieces, crabs and soup into the bowls and cover with a good heavy handed sprinkle of coriander. Add more sliced chilli for extra kick if required.
  12. This fish lover's soup is not one for a smart occasion. To enjoy this dish, keep the velvet crabs till last and keep picking and sucking all the tasty white meat.

#### **Chef's Tip**

I always put my combined crab shells in a pile, then stick them on a roasting tray, drizzled with olive oil and give them a 20 minute roasting with a few garlic cloves. Once roasted these make a fabulous base for your next fish stock, which in turn leads into your next spicy fish soup – and so a glorious cycle of crab eating is created.

**Nick Fisher**  
**Author of River Cottage Fish Book**  
**& River Cottage Sea Fishing Handbook**

# Spider Crab cocktail

*by Bryn Williams*





## Serves 4

### Ingredients

- 400g white spider crab meat (*cooked*)
  - Half iceberg lettuce (*shredded*)
  - 250g mayonnaise
  - 50g tomato ketchup
  - 10ml Worcestershire sauce
  - 2 hard boiled eggs
  - 1 lemon
- 
- 4 Martini glasses (*to serve*)
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1. Mix the mayonnaise, tomato ketchup and the Worcestershire sauce together to make the cocktail sauce.
  2. Fill the bottom of the martini glasses with the shredded iceberg lettuce.
  3. Place a spoonful of the cocktail sauce on the lettuce.
  4. Cover with the crab meat.
  5. Finish with a spoonful of cocktail sauce and add a squeeze of lemon and grate the egg on top.



**Crab Thermidor**  
*by Paul Harvey*

## Serves 2

### Ingredients

- 2 brown crabs, cooked & picked.  
*(Keep the shells)*
- 2 tsp butter
- 2 shallots or onion, *finely chopped*
- 200ml brandy
- 75ml double cream
- ½ tsp English mustard
- 2 tbsp chopped parsley
- ½ lemon juice
- 4 tbsp freshly grated Cheddar
- Basmati rice *(to serve)*

1. Sauté the onions/shallots in the butter until transparent and soft, add the crab meats, lemon juice, brandy then reduce and cook out the brandy.
2. Add the double cream, and simmer for 2-3 minutes to reach the correct consistency (should coat the back of a spoon).
3. Add the English mustard and stir-in together. This is the “Thermidor”.
4. Place the “Thermidor” mixture into the crab shells and bake in the oven for 10 minutes.
5. Top with Cheddar, place under grill for a couple of minutes until golden brown.
6. Serve with basmati rice & garnish.

**Paul Harvey, Head Chef**  
**Bolton's Bistro (Cliftonville Hotel) – Cromer**



**Tian of Brown Crab  
with apple and avocado reish**

*by Jamie Donald*

**Serves 4** (as a starter)

### Ingredients

- 250g white crab meat
- 1 small chilli
- 3 spring onions
- 1 beef tomato  
(*peeled, deseeded and finely diced*)
- 2 tbsp of mayonnaise
- 1 Granny Smith apple  
(*finely chopped*)
- A few sprigs of dill
- A few sprigs of parsley
- 1 tbsp lemon juice

### Avocado Relish

- 3 ripe avocados
- 1 small red chilli
- 2 small shallots
- 2 limes (*juice only*)
- A few sprigs of coriander
- 1 tsp brown sugar

1. Finely chop the chilli, spring onion, apple, dill and parsley.
2. Place in a mixing bowl and add the crab meat, tomato, mayonnaise and lemon juice. Stir ingredients together well.
3. Season with salt and black pepper, add more lemon juice if required. Keep cool.
4. Now make the avocado relish by dissolving the sugar in the lime juice.
5. Finely chop the chilli and shallots, coriander and avocado.
6. Mix well and season with salt & black pepper to taste.
7. To serve, divide the crab mixture into four. Place a ring mould in the centre of your serving plate, put the crab mixture in first and top with a layer of the avocado relish.
8. Carefully remove the ring mould, and top again with some dressed leaves to garnish.
9. Serve with some brown bread and a chilled glass of your favourite white wine.

### Chef's Tip

Any leftovers make an excellent sandwich filler!

To add a stronger crab flavour, cover the crab shell with water with vegetable trimmings, simmer for 20 minutes, strain, reduce and add this concentrate to the mayonnaise.

**Jamie Donald, Scottish Seafood Restaurant Chef of the year, 2009. Café Gandolfi, Glasgow**



# Poached Crab

by Peter Weeden

Serves 4

## Ingredients

- One 1.5kg live brown crab  
(or large spider crab)
- “Seawater” made with 20g of sea salt per litre of water
- 1 pinch fennel seeds
- 1 bundle of herbs (*parsley stalk, thyme, bay tied to a stick of celery*)
- 1 onion *skinned & cut in thick rings*
- 6 black peppercorns
- Homemade mayonnaise (*to serve*)
- 1 good quality bloomer to make some melba toast (*to serve*)

## Mayonnaise

- 1 whole free-range egg
- 1 splash white wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 squeeze lemon Juice
- 1 pinch sea salt
- 1 tiny pinch cayenne & white pepper
- 1 pinch saffron
- Vegetable oil (*sunflower or rapeseed*)



1. First start by toasting the saffron by wrapping it in a tinfoil envelope placed under the grill for about 30 seconds, then reserve to put in mayonnaise.
2. To make the mayonnaise, put the egg, white wine vinegar, mustard, lemon juice, salt & pepper and the saffron in a glass measuring jug & whizz with a hand blender. Gradually add the vegetable oil, and keep whizzing till the mixture thickens to roughly the ½ pint mark. You can keep adding oil until just over the ¾ pint mark. Add a slosch of extra virgin olive oil to flavour. If consistency is too thick, a splash of water will help thin it down.
3. Now place the crab in a sufficiently large pan (*see chef's tip*).
4. Cover with the made-up "seawater".
5. Add the onion, fennel seeds, peppercorns & herbs.
6. Bring quickly to the boil and simmer for 10 minutes.
7. Leave in the pan to cool for 30 minutes (the crab will continue to cook).
8. Cut very thin slices of bread and grill till dry & crispy, and cut lengthways to make the melba toast.
9. Remove the crab from the pan & set about extracting every last delicious scrap of meat from the legs, claws & body\*.
10. You can choose to eat as you go (make sure you have warm water and lemon for finger bowls) or stockpile & defer gratification 'till all the work is done' so you can sit back and enjoy with clean hands.

\* To prepare your cooked crab, follow the step-by-step guide at the back of this booklet.

#### **Chef's Tip**

This recipe requires using a live crab. My way of humanely despatching of a crab involves two insertions (using a sturdy but narrow bladed knife like an oyster knife): the first into the hole below the vent flap & the other pointing back into the animal where there is a depression just in front of the mouth covers. If unsure just ask your supplier/fishmonger to do this for you.

**Peter Weeden**  
Chef, Paternoster Chop House

## Cooked crab preparation guide

1. Twist off large claws, and all other legs where they join the body and set aside.
2. Turn crab onto its nose (shell towards you) and push forward with your thumbs to detach the underside part from top shell. A firm tap with flat of hand at the top may help.
3. Pull out, remove and discard bristly mouth parts, the air sac and transparent membranes from the top shell, as well as any other pieces of white cartilage.
4. Break off and remove grey “feathery” gills (also known as *dead man’s fingers*) from the underside part of the crab and discard. Contrary to popular belief they are not poisonous – just not very palatable.





2b



3



4



7a



7b



7c

**5.** Cut the carapace in half down the centre using a sharp large knife.

**6.** Scrape out all the yellow coloured matter and discard. Then using a teaspoon handle or pick, take out any meat from the “honeycomb” part of the cartilage.

**7.** Break the large claws from the leg section and crack by using back of a stout knife taking care not to crush the meat inside. Large claws have three joints which you may need to insert the knife into, in order to break-up.

**8.** You may be able to remove the claw meat in one piece and set aside.

**9.** Using the handle of a teaspoon take out the white meat, and put into bowl. And repeat with all the legs. You may find you need to crack the shell and use a pick to get to some of the white meat.





## How to dress your crab

**10.** You will need to enlarge the opening of the shell in order to be able to “dress” the crab. Insert point of sharp knife to break, twist and separate (you will find a “natural line” to guide you).

**11.** The classic way to dress your crab is to gather the brown meat to the middle, and then add all the white meat collected from body, claws and legs each side of the brown meat.

**12.** The finishing touches are down to your taste. You can add mayonnaise, crumbled hard boiled egg, chives or parsley.



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The Shellfish Association of Great Britain supports the “enjoy seafood twice-a-week” campaign by Seafish, the authority on seafood, which recommends that adults should eat at least two portions of seafood every week, at least one of which should be oil rich.



- A portion of crab represents one of your 2-a-week seafood
- Just 100g of crab meat represents 45% of your recommended weekly intake of Omega-3



Crabs are also rich in Copper, Zinc, Selenium, Vitamin B2 and are a very good source of Protein and Magnesium.

- Crab meat contains 3 times the amount of selenium than cod and 12 times that of beef. (selenium plays a key role in our antioxidant defence system, preventing damage to cells and tissues)

Our crab & other species health factsheets, reports and previous cookbooks can be found on [www.shellfish.org.uk](http://www.shellfish.org.uk)

Unsure of how to prepare shellfish? Watch our “how to” videos on [www.youtube.com/shellfishGB](http://www.youtube.com/shellfishGB)

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- Steve Hatt for this assistance with the step-by-step crab preparation guide.

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The Shellfish Association of Great Britain is the industry’s trade body based at Fishmongers’ Hall, and supported by The Fishmongers’ Company, one of London’s oldest livery companies. First founded as the Oyster Merchants’ and Planters’ Association in 1903, and renamed The Shellfish Association of Great Britain in 1969, the association has steadily extended its range of activities from “harvest to sale” in over a century of support to the industry.



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