

CRAB 101

Understanding Pasteurized Crabmeat better! Why the different species matter.

We hope to help you understand how the species involved in this category impact each other and the pricing of each.

Callinectes sapidus:

Also known as “Blue Crab” is a member of the Portunidae (Swimming Crab family). This species is most abundant from Massachusetts to Texas, the Gulf of Mexico and Mexico itself. Good supplies exist in South America, (mainly Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador). This is where the Pasteurized Crabmeat category got started. The shortage of this species back in the early 1980’s forced Packers to look for alternative species. The majority of this species goes to the Fresh market “domestically”. The meat color tends to be slightly darker than the Southeast Asia species and slightly sweeter in taste. The negative feature of this product is the shell content (due to the fact they can’t spend time picking the shell as extensively or the cost would be cost prohibitive).

Portunus pelagicus: This species is also known as “Swimming Blue Crab” and a member of the Portunidae family. The species can be found around the world but predominantly in Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines), India, Africa and Australia. This species most closely resembles the *sapidus* species mentioned above. Pricing should be very similar to the *sapidus* species but may vary due to seasonally and supplies.

Portunus hanii: This species is also known as “Swimming Blue Crab” or “Red Crab” and is also a member of the Portunidae family. The species is found mainly in China and throughout Southeast Asia. When you hear the term “Chinese Crabmeat”, they are referring to this species. The reason it’s called Chinese crabmeat is a direct reference to the initial country of origin. The texture is firmer, the meat is more white and the taste is not as sweet as compared to the *pelagicus* species. The species is deemed a second tier product due to these inherent traits and considering the initial country of origin. The price of Jumbo Lump *hanii* species product can be as much as \$4/lb. less than the *pelagicus* species. The other styles of meat can vary as much as \$2 to \$3/lb. less.

Blended Product: The ingredient statement on each can will identify the status of the pack. If you see the term “crabmeat” listed without the name of the species – you can be pretty much assured this is most likely a “blended” pack. Blended meaning other *Portunus* species are included in the pack. The other species being Spotted and Mud crabs (to name a few). The cost of these species is less thus the Packer has a finished product that costs less and thereby can offer a less expensive alternative to the end-user.

Terminology: When it comes to crabmeat and you hear the term Claw, Jumbo Lump and Colossal, you pretty much know what to expect when you open the can. Terms such as Lump, Deluxe, Special, Backfin, Super Lump and Regular can be very confusing. You MUST get into the can to see exactly what you are competing with. Don’t let price and the name of the style of meat dictate what you expect to see. There is NO standard of identity for this category. These terms mean different things to different companies. Lump identity is the “bottom line”. Also, don’t forget to check the middle of the can. Packers have been known to dress the top and bottom and fill the middle with body meat.

1) Types of Crabmeats being sold in market Place:

- a. FRESH
- b. PASTEURIZED
- c. FROZEN

2) Species & Countries of Origin:

- a. *callinectes sapidus* (BLUE CRAB)
Mid-Atlantic States, Carolinas, Florida, Louisiana, Alabama and Mexico on Gulf Side, Venezuela and Colombia in South America
- b. *portunus pelagicus* (BLUE SWIMMING CRAB)
Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, Thailand, China, India
- c. *portunus Haanii and trituberculatus* (BLUE SWIMMING CRAB)
Vietnam, Philippines, Thailand, China.

3) Blending of Species @ Manufacturer Level:

- a. Pros.
Increase output of total tonnage of crabmeat
- b. Cons.
Lower quality of product overall
Inconsistency of pack
Lack of Flavor

4) Styles of Meats (NO STANDARD OF IDENTITY IN INDUSTRY)

- Imperial / Colossal
- Jumbo Lump
- Super Lump
- Lump
- Backfin
- Special
- Claw
- Cocktail Claw

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