



Crab, Soft-Shell

description

Soft-shell crabs are one of America's favorite seafood delicacies. While all crabs shed their shells to grow, only a few species of crab can actually be eaten in this form. The blue crab is the only commercially available soft-shell product. The soft-shell is the blue crab in its molted state.

source

The primary producing states are Maryland, North & South Carolina, and Louisiana.

harvest method

Timing is everything. Once molting starts, there are only a few hours before they begin growing another hard shell. To prevent this, they are caught just prior to losing their shells and closely monitored in holding tanks until the molting is complete. At that time they are whisked from the water and either frozen immediately, or packed in wet paper or straw and shipped live, via seafood purveyors, to restaurants and markets. All of this must happen quickly, as these crabs can only survive a few days out of water.

harvest season

The molting process means an abundant supply of soft-shell crabs from late spring to early fall, with May through September ranking as the most productive months. They are available frozen year round.

flavor

Once molting is complete, most of the crab is edible. They are succulent and juicy.

texture

Moist and tender.

preparation

Soft-shell crabs take only minutes to cook, so they're traditionally simply pan-fried or sautéed.

quality control

Soft-shell crab is shipped live but typically marketed as fresh. The best way to store a soft-shell crab is in cool, moist packaging. Wet newspaper and straw have all been used to maintain the moisture content. If the product is to be held live, it will be important to store it in a 50-degree temperature.

market segments

Soft-shell crab is appropriate for casual dining, fine dining, hotels, and resort/clubs.

nutritional facts

1 fried soft-shell crab

Calories 334; total fat 18g; saturated fat 4g; cholesterol 45mg; sodium 1,118mg; carbohydrates 3g; protein 11g; potassium 163mg.



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