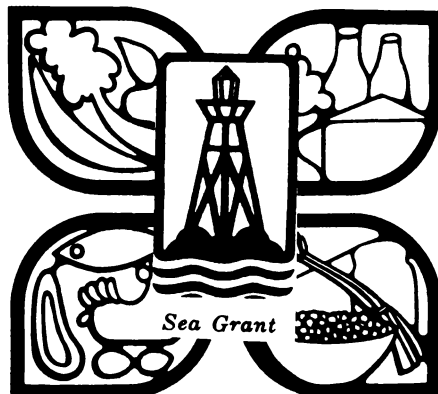


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FOODS AND NUTRITION

MF-519

June 1980

CRABS

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BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA

Crab is a favorite Virginia shellfish.

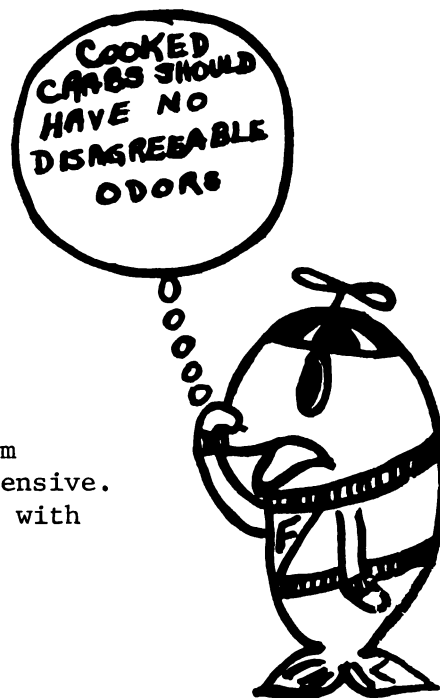
Catching crabs is a family sport in some sections of the state but inlanders have to do their crabbing at a fish market or grocery store.

If you are crabbing, be sure that the area has not been closed by the Health Department. If you are in doubt, call your local Health Department to find out which areas are closed.

BUYING CRABS

You can buy crabs live, cooked in the shell, cooked and removed from the shell, or canned.

1. If you buy live crabs, be sure that they are alive and will move their legs when touched. DO NOT BUY DEAD CRABS.
2. If you buy cooked crabs in the shell, they should have no disagreeable odor and should be bright red or pink in color.
3. Cooked picked meat is available in several grades. The least expensive may be the best buy depending on how you plan to use it.
 - a. Backfin or lump meat is whole pieces of white meat from the large body muscles in the crab. This is the most expensive grade and is used where appearance counts.
 - b. Regular or flake meat is small pieces of white meat from the body.
 - c. Claw meat is the reddish-brown meat from the claws. It usually is the least expensive.
 - d. Cocktail claws or fingers are claw meat with a partial claw attached.



4. Crab meat in cans in the refrigerated case has been pasteurized so that it will keep longer -- up to 6 months in the refrigerator. Once opened it must be used within 3 days.

Canned crab meat which is shelf stable is also available. You'll find it with the other canned meat products at the store.

STORING CRAB MEAT

All forms of crab meat, except the shelf-stable canned variety, must be stored in the refrigerator.

Live crabs should be boiled or steamed as soon as possible. Pick the meat from the body and claws and refrigerate.

Fresh steamed crabs and cooked fresh crab meat will keep 3 to 5 days in the refrigerator.

Freezing crab meat makes it tough and watery, and causes it to lose flavor. It is better to make crab into a prepared dish ready for cooking for freezing.

A pound of crab meat can be stretched to serve 6 or more people.

Boiled Blue Crabs

24 live, hard-shell, blue crabs
6 quarts boiling water
Seasoning if desired

Place crabs in boiling water, cover and return to boiling point. Simmer for 15-20 minutes. Drain. Serves 4 to 8 people.

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