

food and recipes

Louisiana's State Crustacean: CRAWFISH

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Crawfish Boil



Crawfish Salad With Spicy Cajun Remoulade

Crawfish is probably the one ingredient that most Americans associate with Cajun cooking. Once deemed a poor man's food from the swamp waters of southern Louisiana, these little lobster-like crustaceans were a treat that local fishermen enjoyed only at home. It wasn't until they were specially featured at the Breaux Bridge Centennial Celebration in the early 1960s that crawfish gained widespread social acceptance. Once the world discovered the sweet, tasty meat of the "mudbug," they started showing up not only in backyard boiling pots but also on restaurant tables. Due to their rise in popularity, crawfish are now commercially farmed throughout the South...and, luckily for us, are now available in the mid-South.

Fill a large 18- to 20-gallon pot three-quarters full. Add the crab boil seasoning. Cover the pot, and bring the water to a boil over high heat. Boil 2 to 3 minutes to allow the spices to mix well.

Using a large wire basket that fits into the pot, add the onions, sausage, potatoes, garlic and corn. Maintain a boil, and cook 10 minutes or until the potatoes are tender. Add the crawfish to the wire basket, stirring them a bit. Cook an additional 7 to 10 minutes, being careful not to overcook the crawfish. Remove the wire basket from pot.

To serve, line a table with newspaper. Lift the basket from the stock and drain. Dump the basket ingredients directly on newspaper.

Crawfish boils where guests "peel 'um, eat 'um and suck the heads" are one of the most popular ways to enjoy this Cajun treat. Live crawfish are boiled in a spicy mixture of garlic, onions, corn cobs, new potatoes and the all-important cayenne pepper. The finished product is dumped on a platter or a table covered with newspaper. Guests eat the tasty meat of the crawfish tails and then suck the spicy juices from the head.

Crawfish can also be enjoyed in more "refined" dishes such as Crawfish Bisque or Crawfish Étouffée. Crawfish imparts a spicy twist to a classic Louisiana Shrimp Remoulade. Stuffed in a flaky pie crust, crawfish give pie a whole new meaning.

Crawfish season runs roughly from January through June. Ask your grocer's seafood manager to order it for you, fresh or frozen, in advance.

CRAWFISH BOIL

From Clifford Tillman of Cajun Crawdad's, Inc.

Serves 10 to 12

- 30 lbs. live crawfish (one sack)
- 2 cups salt for purging
- 2 (3 oz.) boxes crab boil seasoning
- 10 small onions, peeled and halved
- 2 lbs. cocktail smokies or sliced Boudin sausage
- 5 pounds small red or new potatoes, unpeeled
- 4 heads garlic, sliced in half
- 10 ears of fresh corn on the cob, shucked and broken in halves

To purge the crawfish, place them in a large plastic tub or a large ice chest and rinse them in enough changes of water for the water to run reasonably clear. Then add more water to cover the crawfish and add 2 cups of salt. Stir for 3 minutes, then rinse crawfish. Keep the cleaned and drained crawfish uncovered until ready to cook.



Crawfish Étouffée

to taste. Add the crawfish tails, and sauté over medium-low heat about 15 minutes. Turn off the heat, cover and let stand for 20 minutes for the flavors to blend. Serve over rice.

CRAWFISH PIE

From Clifford Tillman of Cajun Crawdad's, Inc.

Serves 4 to 6

- 1 lb. crawfish tails and fat
- 3 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 14 oz. pack of diced frozen trinity (celery, yellow onion and green bell pepper)
- 1 tbsp. minced garlic
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup tomato sauce
- 4 tbsp. cornstarch
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 1 tbsp. parsley, chopped finely
- Pinch thyme
- 1 tbsp. green onion, chopped finely
- 1 pack of refrigerated Pillsbury Pie Crust
- Cajun seasoning (Tony Chachere's preferred) to taste

Place the vegetable oil, trinity and garlic in a large cast-iron skillet over medium heat, and simmer until the onions are wilted, stirring frequently.

Remove half of the cooked vegetables mixture, and set them in another large skillet. Set aside.

Combine 1/2 cup water and tomato sauce, and pour into the cast-iron skillet on top of the remaining half of vegetables; bring to a simmer. Slowly add cornstarch through a sifter stirring the whole time to thicken sauce. You want to get it about as thick as ketchup. Season to taste with the Cajun seasoning. Turn down the heat to low, and let simmer.

Add the other 1/2 cup of water to the crawfish tails and fat. Add the crawfish mixture and butter into the other skillet where the other half of the vegetables are, and simmer on medium heat for about 5 minutes.

Add the crawfish tail mixture to the tomato sauce mixture in the large cast-iron skillet. Add parsley, thyme and green onions, and mix together. Check taste, and add more Cajun seasoning or salt if needed.

Preheat oven to 450° F. Place one of the two piecrusts into a greased 9-inch pie pan, and form to bottom of pan. Spoon in the crawfish filling, and place the second piecrust over the top. Seal the edges of the pie by pinching crust together. (Put a little water on your fingers when pinching crusts together to keep it from sticking to your hands.) Using a fork, poke about 10 sets of holes in the top of the piecrust. For a golden look to the piecrust, you can brush egg wash onto the top crust.

Place pie pan on a baking pan to catch any boil-over from the pie, and place in oven for about 5 minutes. Turn oven down to 400° F, and let bake another 15 to 20 minutes or until crust is golden brown.

Remove from oven, and let cool 20 to 30 minutes.

Hand Pie Variation: Cut the pie dough into 3-inch circles. Place a



Crawfish Pie

CRAWFISH ÉTOUFFÉE

Serves 6

- 2 tbsp. butter
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced celery
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely diced
- 1 green bell pepper, finely diced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 lb. cooked crawfish tails
- Hot sauce to taste

In a large stockpot, melt the butter over medium-high heat. Add the celery, onion, bell pepper and garlic, and sauté until softened. Add the seasonings



For some of the best crawfish in the mid-South, head to Cajun Crawdad's, Inc. Owner Clifford Tillman sells Louisiana crawfish live or already boiled. Stop by either of his two locations (955 Goodman Rd. West in Horn Lake, MS, or at the corner of Germantown Rd. and Trinity Rd. in Cordova, TN) Friday through Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. For more information, visit www.cajuncrawdads.com or call 901.482.2590.

generous spoonful in the center of each, fold the dough over and crimp the edges together with a fork. Fry until golden, or bake for 10 minutes at 450° F.

CRAWFISH SALAD WITH SPICY CAJUN REMOULADE

From *Simply Salads* by Jennifer Chandler

Makes 4 dinner salads or 6 appetizer salads

For the Spicy Cajun Remoulade:

- 1/2 cup tarragon vinegar
- 2 tbsp. freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1/4 cup prepared white horseradish
- 1/4 cup Creole (or spicy brown) mustard
- 2 tbsp. ketchup
- 1 small garlic clove, minced
- 1 tsp. paprika
- Dash cayenne pepper
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

For the salad:

- 1 lb. cooked crawfish tails
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced celery
- 1/2 small white onion, minced

For the Spicy Cajun Remoulade:

In a blender, combine tarragon vinegar, lemon juice, horseradish, mustard, ketchup, garlic, paprika, cayenne and vegetable oil. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

For the salad:

In a large salad bowl, toss together the crawfish meat, celery and onion. Add the remoulade sauce to taste, and gently toss. Spoon over a bed of lettuce. ●

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