

CALIFORNIA CRAYFISH

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Crayfish (also known as crawfish and crawdads) long popular in the southern United States and in Europe, are being discovered by California consumers. With their delicate, lobster-like flavor and firm texture, crayfish have traditionally been used in such dishes as jambalaya, gumbo, bisques and fish stews. Two primary types of crayfish are sold in California seafood markets: *Pacifastacus* (signal crayfish) and *Procambarus* (red or rice field crayfish).

Market size of crayfish vary from 3½ to 7 inches. Figure on 10 to 16 live crayfish per pound. For each pound of cooked shelled crayfish meat from tails and larger claws, you will need about 7 pounds of live whole crayfish.

Boiled crayfish, served whole either hot or chilled, is a popular California delight. This pamphlet gives a sampling of crayfish cuisine. The recipes included in this brochure can be used interchangeably with the two crayfish species. For consumers who are interested in more Cajun recipes, a southern recipe pamphlet, "Rice and Crayfish" can be obtained free from: Rice Council, P.O. Box 740123, Houston, Texas 77274.

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Basic California Crayfish Boil

- 10-12 pounds of live crayfish
- 4 gallons of water
- 10 tablespoons of salt (or to taste)
- 4 lemon halves
- 2-3 bay leaves
- 2 tablespoons black peppercorns

Note: When boiling crayfish for the Jambalaya recipe, the seasonings may be omitted from the cooking water.

Bring above ingredients, except crayfish, to a rolling boil. Drop in live crayfish and return to a boil. Boil 3 to 5 minutes; remove from heat. Serves 3-6.

Variations: Add other ingredients to suit your taste, such as red or cayenne pepper, dill, garlic, vinegar, anise seed, celery, and onion. In the South, it is also common to add potatoes and corn to the boil.

Scandinavian Style Marinade

2 pounds cooked whole
crayfish, chilled
7-8 cups water
¼ cup salt
2 tablespoons dill seed
2 tablespoons dill weed or fresh dill

Optional:
1 cup white wine
1 lemon, juice and rind
1 tablespoon vinegar

Except for the crayfish, bring ingredients to a boil. Simmer 15-30 minutes. Chill marinade. Add crayfish. Refrigerate and marinate overnight. Serve whole, shell and eat. Serves 2-4.

Three Crayfish 'n Dip Ideas

Season to taste:

1. Melted lemon and butter.
2. Dilly Mayonnaise — mayonnaise, lemon juice, dill weed and horseradish.
3. Cocktail Sauce — catsup, chopped onion, chili powder, Worcestershire sauce, lemon juice, horseradish.



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Crayfish Gumbo

3 pounds live crayfish
1 gallon water
1 herb bouquet (parsley and thyme)
1 pod red pepper
¼ cup of chopped onion
1 cup sliced okra (optional)
3 tablespoons ham fat, butter or
margarine

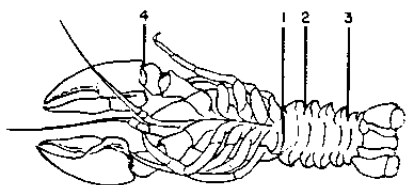
2 sprigs of parsley, minced
A pinch of thyme
2 tablespoons flour
1½ quarts chicken stock or tomato
juice
1 cup or less, cooked diced ham
(optional)
3 tablespoons filé powder
1½-2 cups cooked white rice

Boil crayfish 3 to 5 minutes in water with herb bouquet and red pepper. Strain, saving ½ quart of crayfish liquor. Shell, clean and cut crayfish tails in half. Brown onion (and okra, if used) in ham fat, butter or margarine. Add parsley, thyme, and flour. Combine crayfish liquor and either chicken stock or tomato juice. Bring to a boil. Add crayfish and ham (optional). Simmer for 20 minutes. Season to taste. Remove from heat. Add filé powder and stir. Ladle gumbo into soupbowls. Top each serving with ½ cup of cooked rice. Serves 3-4.

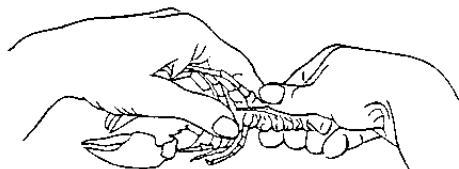
Crayfish served whole are an ideal appetizer or main course because they are delicious, eye catching, conducive to leisurely consumption, and well accompanied by conversation or wine. There is more to eat of a crayfish than its tail, but it is a good starting point as shown below.

EASY STEPS FOR PEELING A CRAYFISH

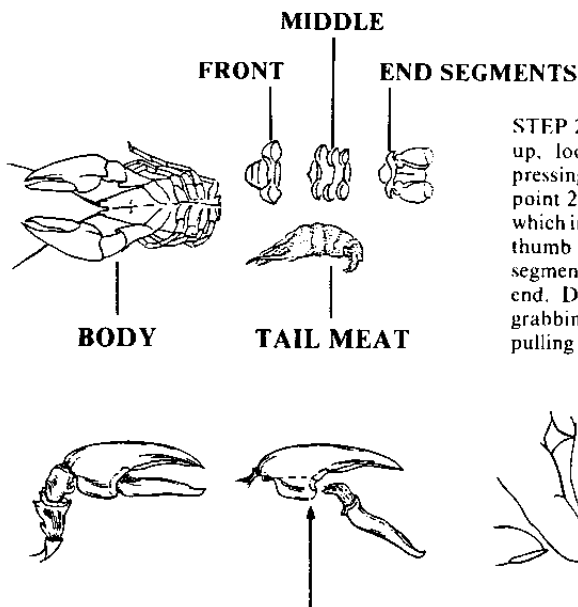
FIGURE A.



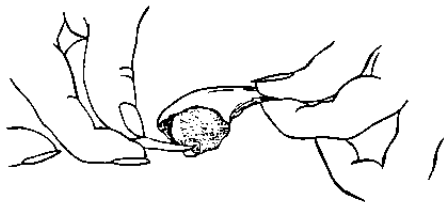
Underside view of a crayfish showing points for removing: (1) tail from body, (2) front shell segment from tail, (3) end shell segments from tail, (4) claw from body.



STEP 1. Turn crayfish upside down. Place thumbs, as shown, at the junction of body and tail (Fig. A-1) and twist off tail.



STEP 2. With underside of tail still facing up, loosen the front shell segment by pressing left thumb against edge of shell at point 2 (Fig. A). Repeat for end segments which include tail fan by twisting with right thumb at point 3 (Fig. A). Remove end segments and then slip middle segments off end. Devein meat, if desired, by gently grabbing top front section and gently pulling backwards.



STEP 3. Twist claw from body at first or second joint (Fig. A-4). Pull off the small section of claw by bending it straight back. With a nutcracker or teeth break the section of claw indicated by arrow.

STEP 4. Using the small claw as a tool pull out claw meat.

STEP 5. (for the **SERIOUS** crayfish consumer) There are more delicious edibles inside the body shell (carapace). Remove the carapace by lifting shell upwards or loosen first by cutting shell across eyes and then lift. Find the rich and creamy white crayfish "butter" on the inside of the shell and scoop with tip of a knife or fingernail. Sip the juices from the large greyish masses (gills) on either side of the body. The gills are basically air sacs which are now filled with cooking juices, especially if the crayfish have been marinated or cooked in broth. In late summer enjoy the red caviar found inside the females—firm and full flavored.

TIPS ON BUYING AND STORING CRAYFISH

Crayfish may be purchased whole (live or fresh cooked) or as peeled tail meat. When buying live crayfish, choose only actively moving animals because dead crayfish spoil rapidly. Dead crayfish can easily be detected by their lack of movement and limp pinchers.

Buy cooked crayfish from a refrigerated or well-iced case. Keep the cooked crayfish refrigerated, or preferably, well-iced until you are ready to eat them. Cooked crayfish are highly perishable and should be consumed within a day or two of purchase.

Crayfish can be held alive for up to a week if they are covered with a damp cloth and stored in the refrigerator or a chilled cooler. To keep crayfish alive, never submerge them in water, place them in plastic bags or other airtight containers, or expose them to sun. To avoid mortalities, cook crayfish within a day or two of purchase.

For best results, freeze only picked, cooked tail meat. Dipping the tails 2 to 5 minutes in a solution of 1 tablespoon of lemon juice per quart of water will prevent the meat from discoloring while frozen. Freeze cooked tail meat in plastic bags or in containers filled with pre-chilled water. Product quality significantly drops after 3 to 4 months in cold storage. Thaw frozen crayfish meat in the refrigerator.

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Quick Crayfish Jambalaya DATE: APR 5 1987

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| 2 cups (8 ounces) shelled crayfish tails (cooked) | 1 cup uncooked rice |
| 2 tablespoons butter or margarine | 1½ cups chicken broth (water or remaining crayfish water from boil may be substituted) |
| 1 cup chopped green peppers | 2 cups canned tomatoes |
| 1 cup <i>each</i> sliced green onions and celery, including tops | 1 teaspoon <i>each</i> salt and poultry seasoning |
| 1 clove garlic, minced | Ground red pepper to taste |

Melt butter or margarine in skillet; add green pepper, celery and onions. Cook until tender, but not brown. Add remaining ingredients and bring to a boil. Stir once or twice, reduce heat, cover and simmer 20 minutes or until tender. Mixture should be slightly moist. Adjust seasonings as needed. Fluff with a fork. Serves 3-4.

Variation: Add 2 to 3 tablespoons of crayfish "butter." (See Step 5 of "Easy Steps for Peeling a Crayfish")

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