

Best Crab Cakes

From America's Test Kitchen episode: *Rethinking Seafood Classics*.

Serves 4

Fresh crabmeat will make these crab cakes taste even better. With packaged crab, if the meat smells clean and fresh when you first open the package, skip steps 1 and 4 and simply blot away any excess liquid.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound lump crabmeat, picked over for shells
- 1 cup milk
- 1 1/2 cups panko bread crumbs
- Salt and pepper
- 2 celery ribs, chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1 garlic clove, peeled and smashed
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 4 ounces shrimp, peeled, deveined, and tails removed
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon hot pepper sauce
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon Old Bay seasoning
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place crabmeat and milk in bowl, making sure crab is totally submerged. Cover

and refrigerate for at least 20 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, place $\frac{3}{4}$ cup panko in small zipper-lock bag and finely crush with rolling pin. Transfer crushed panko to 10-inch nonstick skillet and add remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ cup panko. Toast over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, until golden brown, about 5 minutes. Transfer panko to shallow dish and stir in $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt and pepper to taste. Wipe out skillet.

3. Pulse celery, onion, and garlic in food processor until finely chopped, 5 to 8 pulses, scraping down bowl as needed. Transfer vegetables to large bowl. Rinse processor bowl and blade and reserve. Melt butter in now-empty skillet over medium heat. Add chopped vegetables, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt, and $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon pepper; cook, stirring frequently, until vegetables are softened and all moisture has evaporated, 4 to 6 minutes. Return vegetables to large bowl and let cool to room temperature. Rinse out pan and wipe clean.

4. Strain crabmeat through fine-mesh strainer, pressing firmly to remove milk but being careful not to break up lumps of crabmeat.

5. Pulse shrimp in now-empty food processor until finely ground, 12 to 15 pulses, scraping down bowl as needed. Add cream and pulse to combine, 2 to 4 pulses, scraping down bowl as needed. Transfer shrimp puree to bowl with cooled vegetables. Add mustard, hot pepper sauce, lemon juice, and Old Bay seasoning; stir until well combined. Add crabmeat and fold gently with rubber spatula, being careful not to overmix and break up lumps of crabmeat. Divide mixture into 8 balls and firmly press into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-thick patties. Place cakes on rimmed baking sheet lined with parchment paper, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

6. Coat each cake in panko, firmly pressing to adhere crumbs to exterior. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in now-empty skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Place 4 cakes in skillet and cook without moving them until golden brown, 3 to 4 minutes. Using 2 spatulas, carefully flip cakes, add 1 tablespoon oil, reduce heat to medium-low, and continue to cook until second side is golden brown, 4 to 6 minutes. Transfer cakes to platter. Wipe out skillet and repeat with remaining 4 cakes and remaining 2 tablespoons oil. Serve immediately.

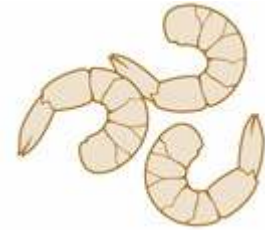
TECHNIQUE

CRAB CAKE CLARITY

Most recipes resort to flavor-dulling binders like mayonnaise and eggs. Instead, we employ a two-step approach that enhances the meat's delicate flavor while providing just as much structure.

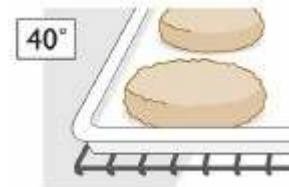
BIND WITH SHRIMP

A puree of shrimp and cream holds the cakes together without dulling the meat's delicate flavor.



FIRM UP IN FRIDGE

Resting the cakes in the refrigerator for 30 minutes helps them set.



America's Test Kitchen is a 2,500-square-foot kitchen located just outside of Boston. It is the home of *Cook's Country* and *Cook's Illustrated* magazines and is the workday destination for more than three dozen test cooks, editors, and cookware specialists. Our mission is to test recipes until we understand how and why they work and arrive at the best version. We also test kitchen equipment and supermarket ingredients in search of brands that offer the best value and performance. You can watch us work by tuning in to *America's Test Kitchen* (www.americastestkitchen.com) on public television.