

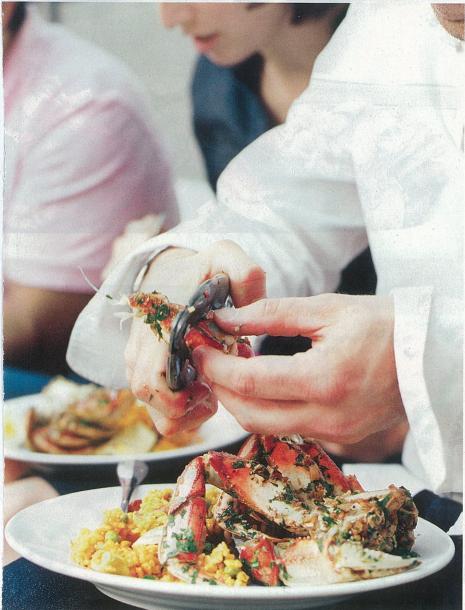


It's finally warm enough to venture into the water (or your local fishmonger's) to find Dungeness crabs. Bring the pleasure of summer's best catch home with our favourite recipes

by Sarah Bancroft recipes by Murray Bancroft photography by Birthe Piontek







or the past six or seven years, my husband and I have hosted a movable feast, which we loosely refer to as Crab Fest. It's a casual affair that comes together only when the conditions are right: a very low tide and a sunny weekend in early summer. Crabbing is best just before the commercial fishery opens in mid-June, but only once the water is warm enough to stand in.

When the stars align, a dozen or more of us head to a secluded beach 45 minutes from Vancouver, \$5 fishing licences (bought online) in hand, and wade out into the water with old tennis racquets. Our goal: to catch Dungeness crabs hiding in the reeds or floating out in an estuary known as Crab Alley. After measuring their shells and checking their gender (for sustainability, females must be released), we bucket our catch and head back to the sandy shore.

It can take 45 minutes or four hours to catch our limit (four per person); either way, it's great exercise and Survivor-style fun. American bald eagles land mere metres away to gobble up the crabs left on the beach, and the wide-open mountain views are breathtaking.

Luckily for us, the Crab Fest crowd is a fun bunch of chefs (including my husband, Murray Bancroft, whose recipes follow), out-of-towners and, lately, babies and kids. The people change every year, and we've learned that as long as you have twice as many napkins as you think you'll need, everything works out.

Back home, the chefs sift through the kitchen in their wet bathing suits, pulling out black beans, dried chilies, Vietnamese beer, kaffir-lime leaves — whatever they like — and cook the crabs two or three different ways. Last time, the sancerre was flowing freely (we were thirsty, after all) but no matter - there's always more wine. Crab, on the other hand? Don't count on leftovers.













## PERFECT COMPLEMENT

Arrange some arugula or baby greens on plates. Add some cured meat like prosciutto or bresaola and some wide shavings of parmesan. Then simply drizzle with olive oil and a squeeze of fresh lemon juice.



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