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Crab Meat – Blue Crab

Crab meat is the most commonly used crab product. Most crab meat comes from Blue Swimming Crab (*Portunus pelagicus*) with smaller amounts from Blue Crab (*Callinectes sapidus*). Crab meat from Dungeness crab, snow crab and king crab is also available.

Blue Swimming Crab is found in warm coastal waters of the Indian and West Pacific Oceans. Most Blue Swimming Crab Meat is imported from Southeast Asia and the Philippines. Blue Crab, a relative of Blue Swimming Crab, is found in brackish waters along the US Atlantic Coast and Gulf of Mexico and down through Central and South America.

Both species of crab have noticeably flattened and paddle-shaped back legs that allow them to swim. Both species are wild captured throughout their ranges by pots/traps, dredges, bottom gillnets and some bottom trawling. The crabs are cooked after harvest then the meat is handpicked and packed in cans and pouches.

Crab Meat is available in a variety of cuts/grades depending on where the meat came from on the crab ([view chart of Crab Meat Grades](#)). In general, the larger the lump of crab meat, the firmer the texture. Body meat is white, tender and flaky. Claw meat has a brownish tint and more intense, nutty flavor. Jumbo Lump, large pieces from the muscles connected to the swimming legs, is considered the highest quality meat.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch® rates trotline caught Blue Crab from Chesapeake Bay as a “Best Choice” and pot caught Blue Crab from the US as “Good Alternative.” The Louisiana Blue Crab Fishery is certified sustainable to the standards of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). All MSC certified fisheries rate at least a “Good Alternative” by Seafood Watch®.

Seafood Watch® rates Blue Swimming Crab as “Best Choice” when pot caught in Australia’s Spencer Gulf, New South Wales, and Peel Harvey Estuary. Pot caught Blue Swimming Crab from Australia’s Cockburn Sound, Shark Bay, Queensland and Gulf of St Vincent rates as “Good Alternative.” Seafood Watch® rates Blue Swimming Crab as “Avoid” when caught by pot or gillnet in Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand or Vietnam; caught by gillnet in India; or caught by bottom trawl in Indonesia, India, or Shark Bay Australia.

The fisheries in Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and Philippines are currently engaged in Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) to improve the sustainability of the fishery while supporting the communities and families dependent on the fishery. India is developing a FIP.

Sources



Species Name

Portunus pelagicus – Blue Swimming Crab | Callinectes sapidus – Blue Crab



Source

Blue Swimmer Crab is found in the Indian and Western Pacific coastal waters and generally imported from Southeast Asia and the Philippines. Blue Crab may be found from Nova Scotia to northern Argentina but are most common from Massachusetts to Texas. Both types of crab are bottom dwellers that live in a variety of shallow coastal habitats.



Seasonality

Year round.



Fishing Method

Wild caught by pot/trap, dredges, bottom gillnet and some bottom trawl.

Features



Flavor

Delicate, sweet flavor and firm, tender texture. The body meat is more delicate in flavor and the claw meat is nutty. The back swimming legs have firmer and larger meat than the other legs.



Dietary Information

Per 100g raw, edible portion Blue Crab:

Calories 87

Fat 1.08g

Saturated Fat 0.222g

Protein 18.06g

Sodium 293mg

Selenium 37.4mcg

Cholesterol 78mg

Omega-3 0.320g

Source: USDA



Appearance

Body meat is white and claw meat is pinkish brown. Pasteurized Crab meat is firmer and darker than unpasteurized meat.



Form

Pasteurized crab meat. The crab is caught and cooked. The meat is then handpicked and graded.

Uses



Preparation

Crab Meat is versatile and perfect for many preparations, such as crab cakes, soups and chowders, casseroles, salads, dips and stuffings.



Substitution

Mexican Blue Crab Meat and Red Swimming Crab Meat



Handling

Crab Meat should be refrigerated at 33-38 degrees F. DO NOT freeze pasteurized Crab Meat as it will negatively impact the flavor and texture.

Market



Sizes and Cuts

Crab Meat comes in a variety of sizes/grades.

- Colossal – 9.5 gram/up whole pieces of large white meat from near the swimming legs
- Jumbo Lump - 5-9.4 gram whole pieces of large white meat from near the swimming legs
- Super Lump - long white backfin muscle (body meat) with broken and undersized Jumbo Lump pieces
- Lump - large broken pieces white body meat
- Backfin - medium broken pieces Lump and smaller pieces white body meat
- Special - flaky and finely shredded white body meat
- Claw Meat - pinkish/light brown color whole leg meat and shredded claw meat
- Claw Fingers – light brown meat from the claw



Pricing Scale

Pricing will vary depending on the grade and species as well as supply and demand. Due to market and currency fluctuations, please contact your Seattle Fish Company of New Mexico associate for up-to-date market information and current pricing information.



Shelf Life

Pasteurized Crab Meat that has been handled properly should retain optimum quality for 18 months.

Market Names
Crab Meat Blue Crab Meat (only from <i>Callinectes sapidus</i>) Swimming Crab Meat, Blue Swimming Crab Meat (from <i>Portunus pelagicus</i>)
Where Caught
U.S. Atlantic Coast, Southeast Asia – Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand
How Caught
Wild-caught by trap, dredge, gillnet and trawl.

