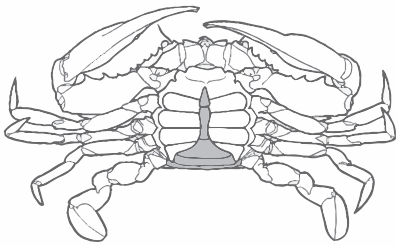


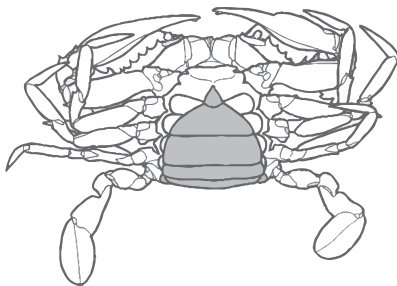
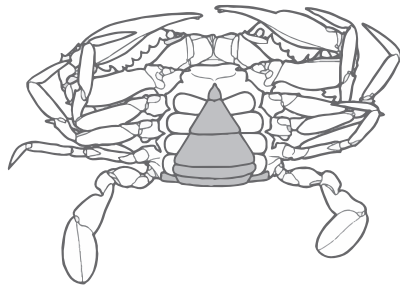
## MALE VS. FEMALE

Blue crabs have a plate on their underside that can be used to determine sex and maturity.



**MALE (Jimmy):**  
Washington Monument shaped apron

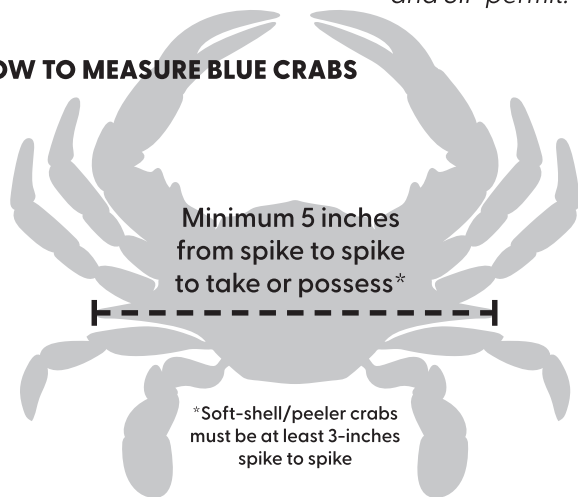
**IMMATURE FEMALE (Sally):**  
Pyramid shaped apron



**MATURE FEMALE (Sook):**  
Capitol shaped apron

*Mature adult females of any size may be kept with a valid fishing license and SIP permit.*

## HOW TO MEASURE BLUE CRABS



Minimum 5 inches from spike to spike to take or possess\*

\*Soft-shell/peeler crabs must be at least 3-inches spike to spike

## HOW TO CLEAN A BLUE CRAB

Catching a blue crab is not difficult. Cleaning it is another story. First, boil the live crabs in salted water for about 15 minutes. Then drain them and let them cool for several minutes until you can comfortably handle them.

Lift the plate on the underside of the crab. Males have a narrow plate, and females have a broader plate or apron.

After lifting the plate, pull the top half of the shell off and discard. Edible meat is on the bottom half.

Remove the legs and pinchers. Break the pinchers with a claw cracker or hammer and remove claw meat, and keep any meat attached to the legs.

The light-yellow material in the center of the crab can be discarded, though some people like to eat it. Known as “fat,” this material is actually the reproductive part of the crab.

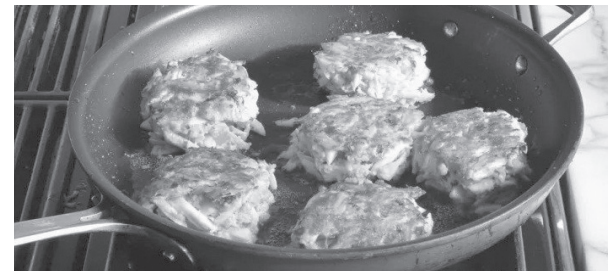
Discard the feathery structures found on either side of the bottom half of the shell. Known as “dead man,” these are gills and should not be eaten.

Break the bottom half of the shell in two. With a pointed knife or nimble fingers, pick out the white crab meat. Take care to remove the partitions separating the meat.

What you have now is a delectable tidbit. True, there isn't much meat in a single crab, and crab picking can be slow and hard going, but many coastal residents agree fresh crab meat is about the best seafood available.



Scan this code with your smartphone's camera to see a YouTube video on crab picking by the University of Georgia's Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant.



## BLUE CRAB CAKES RECIPE

### Ingredients:

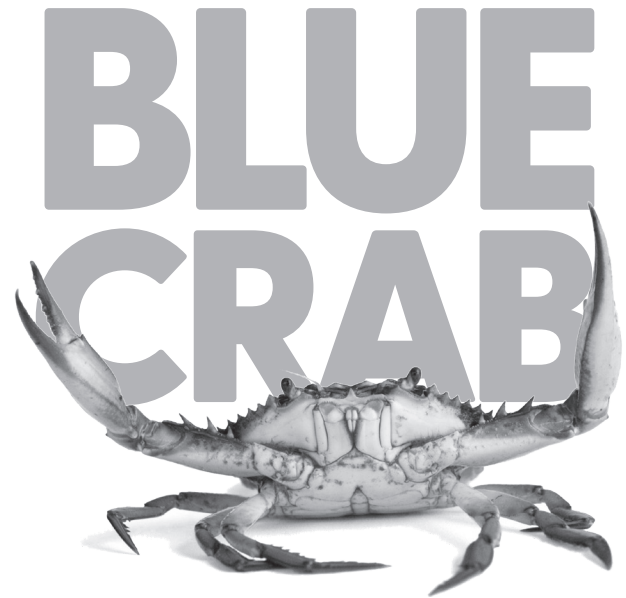
- 2 large eggs
- 2½ tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1½ teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon Old Bay seasoning
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup finely diced celery, from one stalk
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley
- 1 pound lump crab meat (see note below)
- ½ cup panko
- Vegetable or canola oil, for cooking

### Instructions:

Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil for easy clean-up.

Combine the eggs, mayonnaise, Dijon mustard, Worcestershire, Old Bay, salt, celery, and parsley in a large bowl and mix well. Add the crab meat (be sure to check the meat for any hard and sharp cartilage) and panko; using a rubber spatula, gently fold the mixture together until just combined, being careful not to shred the crab meat. Shape into 6 cakes (each about ½ cup) and place on the prepared baking sheet. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. This helps them set.

Preheat a large nonstick pan over medium heat and coat with oil. When the oil is hot, place the crab cakes in the pan and cook until golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes per side. Be careful as oil may splatter. Serve the crab cakes warm with tartar sauce.



How to catch, clean, and cook a coastal favorite



COASTAL RESOURCES DIVISION

One Conservation Way  
Brunswick, GA 31520  
912-264-7218  
CoastalGaDNR.org

## THE BLUE CRAB

The blue crab, a hard-shelled marine animal named for its bright blue claws, is abundant in coastal Georgia rivers, creeks, sounds, and nearshore waters. An active swimmer, with its last pair of legs flattened like small paddles, its scientific name is *Callinectes sapidus*, meaning “beautiful swimmer.”

Blue crabs can be found from New Jersey to Florida on the Atlantic coast, and along the Gulf coast to Texas. These crabs feed on most plant and animal matter available to them. During winter months, cooler water temperatures send them into semi-hibernation. However, they are available to fisherman year-round.



Blue crabs have a lifespan of about two to three years on average. Females can carry 700,000 to 2 million eggs on the abdomen for about two weeks until the eggs hatch.

When a blue crab outgrows its hard shell, it sheds that shell by backing out of it. After “molting,” the new soft shell that was beneath the hard outer shell will begin to harden. Blue crabs are frequently harvested during this stage, which lasts just a few hours. These soft-shell crabs provide excellent eating without the trouble of picking the shell.

In Georgia, the commercial blue crab harvest is

the second most important seafood industry after shrimp, bringing crab fishermen an average of \$4.78 million annually. The crab industry is the state’s largest landings by volume, with approximately 3.6 million pounds landed each year.

## HOW TO CATCH BLUE CRABS

There are thousands of places along coastal Georgia where you can catch enough blue crabs for a meal. It takes no special skills or talent, and blue crab fishing can be great family fun.

From spring to late fall, blue crabs can be caught from almost any pier, bridge, or place where you can wade, including beaches of St. Simons, Jekyll, and Tybee islands. A good, easy way to catch blue crabs is the “chicken neck” method. For this you will need a long-handled dip net, a weighted line long enough to reach the water bottom, and a place to crab.

Tie the chicken neck to the end of the line and toss the chicken neck into water deep enough so you can’t see it lying on the bottom. You may want to tie the line to a structure to prevent loss. Watch the line. When the line begins to move or jerk, slowly respool the line. The crab will stay attached to the neck as you raise it from the water. Move the line toward the dip net and gently capture the crab with the net.

Crabs will live for hours if placed in a bucket with a wet rag and kept in a shaded area. Don’t put water in the bucket, or the crabs suffocate when the oxygen in the water is depleted. Dead crabs should never be cooked.

**Caution: A pinch from a blue crab’s claw can be extremely painful, so be careful when you handle them. Use tongs or grasp blue crabs with your thumb and forefinger from the rear.**

Hoop nets or collapsible traps are inexpensive, but good tools to use if crabbing off a dock or pier. The bait--a chicken neck or smelly fish--is set in the middle of the trap and the trap is lowered to the bottom.

As traps are retrieved, crabs attacking the bait are caught. Be sure to check your traps every few minutes.

**Recreational crabbers using commercial-style crab traps (pictured below) must have attached a green float with the crabber’s name and address in 1-inch letters (example pictured at right)**

John Doe  
123 Main St  
Savannah, GA



## GEORGIA CRABBING LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Georgia laws are very encouraging for the sport crabber. Unless otherwise designated, the saltwaters of Georgia are open year-round for recreational crabbing at any time of day.

**Gear:** Up to six standard-size crab traps (2-feet by 2-feet or smaller) may be used recreationally. Two unobstructed escapement rings (at least 2 3/8-inch inside diameter) must be installed on an outside vertical wall. **Each trap must be marked with a fluorescent green or lime green float bearing the owner’s name and address in 1-inch letters.** Traps should be sufficiently weighted to prevent loss in strong tidal currents. Many crabbers choose to attach rebar or other weights to the bottom of crab traps. It is unlawful to place or set crab traps in the channel of any stream with a lawfully established system of waterway markers.

Disposal or abandonment of crab traps in public waters is a violation of state and federal laws.

**Other gear:** Subject to other restrictions outlined in these regulations, legal crabs may be taken with other legal fishing gear such as seines, cast nets, hand-lines, and lift rings.

**Size and harvest limits:** It is unlawful to take

or possess any crab less than 5 inches from spike to spike across the back (other than “soft-shell/peeler” or “mature adult female” crabs). Soft-shell/peelers must measure at least 3 inches from spike to spike across the back. Mature females of any size can be kept (see reverse page for information on how to tell if a crab is a mature female). No sponge (egg-bearing) crabs are allowed. Recreational crabbers may take no more than one bushel of crabs during any 24-hour period. No more than two bushels may be taken recreationally or possessed during a 24-hour period on a boat with more than one person aboard. A bushel is approximately one and a half

**Sponge, or egg-bearing crabs, (seen here) are prohibited from harvest.**



5-gallon buckets worth of adult blue crabs.

**Terrapins in crab traps:** Recent studies have investigated the effectiveness of excluder devices for preventing the inadvertent capture of diamond-back terrapins in commercial-style crab traps. Terrapins that enter crab traps cannot escape and often drown. To receive a free terrapin excluder device, contact DNR’s Wildlife Conservation Section in Brunswick at 912-264-7355.

**Buy a fishing license:** Recreational crabbers must have a valid Georgia recreational fishing license and free Saltwater Information Program (SIP) permit. It is illegal to sell seafood harvested with a recreational license. Visit [www.GoOutdoorsGeorgia.com](http://www.GoOutdoorsGeorgia.com) to buy a fishing license online or find an authorized agent near you. You can also call 800-366-2661.