

Gulf Oil Spill and Crabs

Now that the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has been contained, our minds turn to clean up and to preserving a rich food source.

So, when it comes to crabs, which types are most abundant in this region? Well, the Atlantic and Gulf coast regions surrounding Florida yield approximately 98 percent of the country's stone crab population. Additionally, blue crabs are also found from Nova Scotia, down the east coast of North America, off Bermuda, and throughout the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.

While research continues to be done regarding how the oil spill will affect the present and future for these creatures, crab lovers still have plenty of options when it comes to dining on crab delicacies – they may just have to seek out some other options.

George Baxevanis, owner of a popular seafood restaurant in Asheville, NC knows what it's like to be resourceful when it comes to ordering crabs because his seafood restaurant is located in the mountains of western North Carolina – not exactly an area known for its abundance of crab.

However, ask George what some of his diners crave most and they will tell you – his Alaskan King or snow crab legs.

So, if you get a craving for crab legs, you can try different types of crab from Hawaii, Alaska, and Pacific U.S. waters. Varieties include Dungeness, King, Kona snow crabs and more.

The Sustainable Snow Crab

Snow crab population levels are rebuilding, and overfishing is not occurring. And, according to the National marine Fisheries Service, in 2008, 58.5 million pounds of snow crab were caught and retained in U.S. fisheries in the Bering Sea. U.S.-caught snow crab account for about one third of the snow crab sold in the U.S.

“Snow crab is most noted for its sweet, delicate flavor” says Baxevanis. “It's got a snowy-white meat and tender texture and is perfect for me to serve at Fisherman's Quarters II because of its versatility. It can be served as an appetizer, in a salad, or as an entrée.”

Snow Crab is also high in protein, yet low in fat and calories. For example, a three-ounce serving contains only about 95 calories. It's also available all-year round.

The King of the Crabs – Taste and Profitability

There's a reason why top chefs use King Crab from Alaska on their menus and Baxevanis is not different.

‘Our guests love these,’ he says. ‘They have such a rich and tender taste. They also look pretty impressive when served on a platter.’

Baxevanis tends to run these as specials, but when he does, they go like hotcakes!

As one of the most widely-recognized shellfish, Alaskan king crab commands a specialty menu item position. It also allows profitable pricing for restaurateurs with the added value of easy preparation and reduced labor costs.

Alaskan king crab, like snow crab, is also low in fat and calories; it's a light and healthy source of high-quality protein. One three-ounce serving yields about 82 calories.

Technology Makes it Possible

So, while you may be dismayed by the crabs affected by the Gulf oil spill, there are alternatives. State-of-the-art freezing and processing technology make it possible, within hours of harvest, to ensure a consistent, high-quality product that is sure to satisfy any crab loving consumer – especially convenient when living in the mountains of western North Carolina!