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Shell Fish

Kinds and seasons

Shell fish provides a useful and appetising change, but it contains less nutriment than other kinds of fish and many varieties are not so digestible.

The following list gives the names of the commonest edible varieties of shell fish, with their seasons.

Crab	No close season, but local restrictions imposed. Supplies and condition best April, May and June.
Escallop	Rarely marketed during summer. Best condition from November to March.
Lobster	No legal close season except in Scotland, where it runs from June 1st to September 1st. Most abundant during summer.
Mussel	Seasonable from end of July to April, but best condition in August, September, October and November.
Oyster	
<i>Native</i>	September 1st to June 14th.
<i>Deep Sea</i>	September 1st to June 14th.
<i>Foreign</i>	All year round.
Prawn	Obtainable all year round, but scarcer in winter.

How to select Shell Fish

Shell fish of a medium size are best, they should be heavy in proportion to their size. If fresh, the tail of a cooked lobster will spring back sharply when pulled out straight, while of a fresh crab, the joints are stiff and the shell a good colour. The shells of oysters and mussels should be tightly closed.

How to cook Shell Fish

Excepting oysters, which are usually eaten raw, all shell fish is boiled. In some cases this is the sole method of preparation. In others it is the preliminary step before dressing the flesh, or serving with a sauce. Cooking hardens the flesh and therefore makes it less digestible.

Cook cockles and mussels as follows :—

1. Wash in several waters.
2. Put into a steamer, sprinkle with salt and cook until the shells open a little—about 10 minutes.
3. Remove the flesh from the shell and from mussels take out the small black weed. Strain any liquid into a basin.
4. Serve either hot or cold with vinegar or seasoning, or in a parsley or sharp sauce. Put the cooked cockles or mussels into the made sauce, reheat for a few minutes and serve.

How to dress a Crab

Crabs will have been boiled when sold by the fishmonger.

1. Twist off the claws, turn the crab on to its back and insert the fingers between the body and the shell, and force apart.
2. Remove the inedible parts : the poisonous “ fingers ” or gills which will be found stuck to the sides of the shell, the small sac (stomach) and the small greenish intestines.
3. Remove the crab meat from the shell.
4. Wash and dry the shell.
5. Crack the claws with a hammer, but take care not to crush or splinter, and remove the meat.
6. Take 3–4 tablespoons of a thin salad dressing, all the crab meat, 2–3 tablespoons of fresh breadcrumbs, seasoning and mix well together.
7. Fill the shell with the mixture, decorate with chopped egg and parsley and a few claws.
8. Serve with a green salad.

How to dress a Lobster

Lobsters usually have been boiled by the fishmonger. If a live lobster is obtained, tie the claws securely and plunge head first into a saucepan of boiling salted water. This method instantly destroys life. Then boil the lobster gently for 20–40 minutes according to size. When quite cold, dress in the following way :—

1. Twist off the claws, and crack them with a hammer, but take care not to crush or splinter them.
2. Split the tail down the centre with a sharp pointed knife.
3. Dish on a bed of salad, arranging the tail and claws about the head.
4. Serve with oil and vinegar, or a salad dressing, and brown bread and butter.

How to serve Shell Fish

Crab

Dressed.

Escallop

Stewed and served in a white sauce or dipped in batter and fried.

Lobster

Dressed.

Mussel

Boiled and served with seasoned vinegar or in a parsley or sharp sauce.

Prawn Shrimp

} In salads, sandwiches or as a garnish in sauces, etc.

In most shell fish there is an inedible part which is either indigestible or more or less poisonous, *e.g.*, the beard of an oyster, the small black weed in a mussel, the dead men's fingers or gills in the lobster and crab. These are to be removed before serving.