



its shell. Some companies sort out the crabs and hold the shedders until the day they molt. On that day, the tender soft-shelled crabs are sent, still alive, to the market. But because soft-shelled crabs can remain soft for such a short time, many are now frozen and then distributed. Soft-shelled crabs are prized as delicacies. They are best when small, lightly floured and sautéed in butter. However, most local restaurants serve large ones, battered and fried. You eat the whole crab-claws, skin and all

(without lungs) sometimes in a sandwich.

Many watermen augment their incomes by selling fresh crabmeat. Commercial firms also cook and pick the meat and then pack it in cans, often pasteurizing it. Undoubtedly it keeps longer, but the process also tampers with texture and flavor. Really fresh crabmeat is unbelievably sweet and delicate, and it needs very little cooking because crabs must be cooked before the meat

can be removed from the shell. Just saute' the crabmeat in butter with a little pepper and lemon.

Another favorite is a spicy, steamed crab dish. Add some seafood seasoning to a couple of inches of water in a large steamer or pot. Pour in a beer or two and some vinegar. Bring to a boil and dump in live crabs. Cover and steam the crabs until they are bright red-orange. Pick and dip in fresh, melted butter.