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Carrie Sorenson, MPH, AFC®  
Extension Educator, Family & Consumer Sciences

## GETTING EXCITED FOR MARYLAND BLUE CRABS

Here in Maryland, you don't have to look too hard to figure out our favorite food, animal, and state symbol. Just pop into any Maryland themed store and you will find just about anything you can imagine with a Maryland Blue Crab on it. My friends and family have shirts, hats, socks, towels, oven mitts, and more, that all proudly display a Maryland Blue Crab (and often the Maryland flag as well). But why are Marylanders so obsessed with this particular crustacean?

A quick trip to the Maryland state website, <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/symbols/crab.html>, can help fill in some details. The Maryland Blue Crab has been our state crustacean since 1989. The Chesapeake Bay provides perfect conditions for these crabs to grow and increase in number. It doesn't hurt that they are delicious and a favorite for crab lovers, which means catching them is an important (and profitable!) Chesapeake Bay activity. So, many Marylanders have a strong connection to this local icon.

In fact, Maryland's seafood industry contributes nearly \$600 million to the economy of our state, [according to information](#) from the state government. Since it is such a large part of our state economy, it is that much more important to make sure the crab populations stay healthy! Within the University of Maryland, we have a specific program that works on exactly that mission and strives to make sure the Chesapeake Bay can continue to support crabs and other life for many years to come. They are the Maryland Sea Grant program and you can find out more about them at <https://www.mdsg.umd.edu/welcome-and-mission>. Since their founding in 1977, they have worked on a variety of projects to help improve the health of the bay and increase the blue crab population!

If you are interested in supporting Maryland seafood businesses, one thing you can do is look for the "True Blue" logo at restaurants. The logo refers to a state of Maryland program that encourages restaurants to support the local seafood industry and purchase Maryland blue crab products. If the restaurant gets at least 75% of its crabs from Maryland, then they can use the logo on their menu so that diners know they are getting local crabs and supporting the local economy!

For many of us, myself included, crabs are a summertime favorite. I recently learned that Maryland's crab season officially begins on April 1<sup>st</sup>! Although peak crab harvest will be later in the summer, crabbing (going out and catching crabs) has officially begun. Although I haven't personally been crabbing, I do have so many memories of enjoying crabs with my family. When I was younger, I remember sitting with my Grandma so that she could teach me how to crack the shells and get out all of the tasty meat. Later, after meeting my husband and bringing him to Maryland for the first time, I taught him the same way my grandmother had taught me. Even my mother, who developed a shellfish allergy later in life, still wears gloves to help out when we have people over for a crab dinner! I have a few favorite crab recipes as well, so be sure to keep reading for those recipe ideas.

I also want to provide a bit of information about the nutritional value of blue crab. According to the USDA, they are a good source of protein with about 15 grams per 3 ounce serving. They also contain omega-3 fatty acids, Vitamin B12, folate, iron, niacin, selenium, and zinc (all of which are important nutrients for our bodies). They can be a bit high in cholesterol, so be careful of that if you are watching cholesterol levels. One final nutrition note, crabs can be prepared in ways that add extra sodium or fat (like deep frying). If you are watching your intake of those things, look for simpler preparations that let you add seasoning later so that you can control how much you would like to add. Also, see what options are available if you are ordering crab cakes. You might be able to get them broiled rather than deep fried, which can be a delicious way to enjoy crab with a bit less fat.

I hope that, if you want to, you get to enjoy some delicious Maryland Blue Crabs this season! Here are some recipe ideas in case you want to try:

### **CRAB CAKES (FROM OLD BAY®)**

2 slices white bread, crusts removed and crumbled  
2 tablespoons mayonnaise  
2 teaspoons Old Bay® Seasoning OR Old Bay® 30% Less Sodium Seasoning  
2 teaspoons McCormick® Parsley Flakes  
1/2 teaspoon French's® Classic Yellow Mustard  
1 egg, beaten  
1 pound lump crabmeat

Mix bread, mayonnaise, Old Bay, parsley, mustard and egg in large bowl until well blended. Gently stir in crabmeat. Shape into 4 patties.

Broil 10 minutes without turning or fry until golden brown on both sides. Sprinkle with additional Old Bay, if desired. Yield: 4 servings.

## **MY MOTHER'S MARYLAND CRAB SOUP (IN A CROCKPOT)**

2 cans (14 ounces) vegetable soup (make sure you don't get the cream of vegetable, you want the kind with the broth or tomato base)

2 cans (14 ounces) Manhattan clam chowder (the one that has a tomato base, not New England that has a cream base)

7 cups water

1 bag (16 ounces) frozen mixed vegetables

2 tablespoons Old Bay Seasoning

1 pound crab meat

Combine everything except the crabmeat in a slow cooker/crockpot on low heat. After it is well heated (cooking on low for 4-6 hours), add the crab meat. Cook on low for an additional hour to make sure crab meat is thoroughly heated. Add additional Old Bay, if desired and serve!

Yield: 8 servings.

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Carrie Sorenson, MPH is a Certified Health Education Specialist and an Extension Educator in Family and Consumer Sciences.

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