

VIRGINIA CRAB RECIPES

Old Virginia “no-filler” Crab Cakes:

When my mother married and moved here to the flatlands, she had to learn how to cook local delicacies. An old family friend in the Northern Neck showed her how to make traditional Virginia crab cakes without breadcrumbs or cracker meal. With minor modifications, this is the recipe we still use at home and at “Something Different”.

1 Lb crabmeat, picked over to remove any shells. “Lump” is nice but very expensive.

“special” often has too much shell. We use “backfin.”

1 egg, beaten

4 tsp. Mayonnaise

2 tsp. Prepared mustard (Frenches or dijon)

3 drops vinegar (we use our Eastern NC Sauce)

½ Tbsp. Heavy cream (we omit when made ahead as the crab cakes can get soggy)

A sprinkle of Old Bay seasoning or salt and pepper to taste. We use 1 tsp. Of our “KA” Caribbean seasoning.

Mix ingredients in a small bowl. Gently coat crabmeat without breaking it up. Shape into cakes about 3-4 inches in diameter and ¾ inches thick. Roll in flour or bread crumbs (preferably Panko or Japanese style bread crumbs) and fry in a hot skillet. To broil, dot with butter, squeeze over a little lemon juice, and place under the broiler.

Fried Soft Crabs:

When I got married and brought my Life-Bride, Barbara, back to the farm, she had to learn local cookery, as did my Mother before. Faced with a dozen fresh soft crabs, she called mother to find out how to cook them. “Oh, just dredge them in flour with a little salt and pepper and sauté them”. To Barbara “sauté” meant “fry gently in butter”, so I was presented with a plate full of limp, under-cooked critters. She quickly learned that the best way to fry soft crabs is in an iron skillet with an inch or so of good cooking oil heated almost to the smoking point. Flour and season the crabs and carefully drop them in the hot oil – then stand back or immediately use a good splatter-shield because they are going to pop grease! Turn them once to get both sides crispy and brown.

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