

VOLUME 15 | FALL 2018

THE COASTAL TABLE

an anthology of seaside living

AUTUMN SEASIDE PICNIC
+ apple cakes!

+ a pie collaboration
with Farmhouse Pottery

TABLE TALK: with Tiffani Thiessen

meet the maker:
Modusbox





crabbing on BOUNDARY BAY

The mudflats, eelgrass beds, and salt marshes of British Columbia's Boundary Bay are home to some of the most delicious crustaceans on earth, and you can catch them with your hands.

WORDS, RECIPE + PHOTOS BY TRACEY AYTON



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ROAD TRIP

AS YOU WALK OUT ONTO THE SANDBARS OF BOUNDARY BAY just before low tide, the town of Tsawwassen begins to fade into the distance. Tidal pools of cool water rush across your feet as you venture further. Walk far enough and the rising mist begins to obscure the horizon. Herons soar overhead.

The shallow bay is just south of Vancouver, straddling the Washington state border. It's one of a few places in the world where you can take a quick swim (or, at low tide, walk) from one country to another. The 49th parallel, which demarcates much of the border between Canada and the United States, cuts directly through the bay and its western shore, a stocky peninsula with Tsawwassen, B.C., to the north and, to the south, Point Roberts, an isolated, five-square-mile exclave of the United States. In the summer, at high tide, swimmers gather near the metal border tower where the water is deepest, making for the best swimming.

The bay is home to an impressive array of wildlife. The sand flats serve as an ideal stopping point for birds, such as western sandpipers and dunlin, migrating along the Pacific Flyway, while the waters of the bay and the adjacent Georgia Strait are home to gray whales, orcas, humpback whales, porpoises, seals, and sea lions. Salmon gather in the adjacent Fraser River estuary on their way up the river to spawn. And the bay is teeming with Dungeness and red rock crabs.

Dungeness crabs are arguably the most exciting seafood native to the West Coast. While East Coasters savor their Maryland blue crabs, West Coasters smirk over their superior, heart-shaped Dungeness. But they aren't cheap, with prices that can run as much as lobster meat, which makes their presence in Boundary Bay all the more thrilling. The shallow waters at low tide allow you to catch them on foot, no trap needed.

To get in on the action, you need a fishing license (day licenses are available for around \$5), a bucket or bag, a measuring stick, hip waders (for colder weather) and some patience. Crabbing happens year-round, but the best time is late summer to early fall. At this time of year, the crabs return to the shallows with the cooler water and are more active than usual since they are mating.

Each crabber is allowed to collect up to four per day. The crabs must be male, and must measure 6.5 inches (165 mm) or longer for Dungeness, and 4.5 inches (115 mm) or longer for red rock. For optimal crabbing conditions, check the tide charts and head out two hours prior to low tide.

There are several techniques for catching crabs. If you're brave, you can simply grab the crab by its body, being careful to avoid the pinchers, and toss it in a mesh bag or bucket filled with seawater. Another popular method is to use a tennis racket attached to a longer pole. The crabs claw their way onto the strings of the racket and you can lift them from there into your bucket. Other helpful tools include long tongs, gloves, or a net.

When you catch a crab, flip it over to determine the sex. Check the belly "flap" that points towards the eyes of the crab. If it's shaped like a lighthouse, it's a male and you can keep it. If it's shaped like an igloo, it's a female—let her go, releasing her gently (do not toss, as it can harm the crab). Store the crabs in cold seawater immediately after catching. Once home, store crabs in an open container lined with wet newspaper, in the fridge or a cooler. Plan to eat them the day you catch them.

TA: is it 4 dungeness
or 4 total, red rock
and/or dungeness



Dungeness crab feast

Dungeness crabs are so delicious they don't need more than a quick boil in seasoned water and a dip into garlic butter. This recipe is a classic Dungeness feast, with roasted potatoes and corn on the cob. To host a feast for twelve people, you will need:

- 6 pounds of new potatoes **TA, are these in fact new potatoes you use?**
- Extra virgin olive oil, as needed
- 3 sprigs rosemary
- 1 head plus 4 cloves of garlic, minced
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 3 sticks of butter
- 1 bunch parsley
- 6 live Dungeness crabs (1 crab for every 2 people)
- 12 ears of corn, peeled **TA, are these peeled?**
- 4 lemons, cut into wedges
- Crackers, for serving
- Small forks, for pulling meat out of legs

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Bring an extra-large stockpot of water to a boil. (If you don't have a pot large enough to hold all the crabs, cook in 2 pots or 2 batches.) Salt water more heavily than you would pasta water and add Old Bay.
2. Cut potatoes in quarters and place in a bowl with enough olive oil to coat. Add rosemary, 4 cloves minced garlic, and season with salt and pepper. Toss until potatoes are well coated. Transfer potatoes to baking sheets and spread in a single layer. Roast 45 minutes to 1 hour, until browned and crisp. Flip twice during cooking to ensure even browning. Remove potatoes from oven, toss with parsley, and season to taste. If potatoes are done sooner than crabs and corn, keep warm until ready to serve.
3. Prepare garlic butter. Add butter to a saucepan and cook over low heat until melted. Once melted, add remaining minced garlic (1 head's worth). Keep warm over very low heat until ready to serve.
4. Once water is at a rolling boil, transfer crabs into water using tongs. Cook about 15-20 minutes, or several minutes after shells have turned bright orange. Remove crabs from water with tongs and set aside to cool. Keep water boiling.
5. While waiting for crabs to cool, place 12 ears of corn into boiling water. Cook, covered, 10-20 minutes, or until bright yellow and at desired texture.
6. Once crabs are cool enough to handle, pull all legs off body. Remove back shell, rinse out viscera and pull off gill filaments. Break crabs in half and arrange on a serving platter. Place crab legs on a cutting board and hit them with a rolling pin in several spots to loosen shells for easy removal of meat. Serve halved crab bodies and legs with ramekins of garlic butter, lemon wedges, corn on the cob, roasted potatoes, crackers, and lots of napkins.