



# Seafood Health Facts: Making Smart choices

## Balancing the Benefits and Risks of Seafood Consumption

### *Resources for Healthcare Providers and Consumers*

## **Crab [1]**

### **Types and Sources of Products**

There are several species of crab that are commercially important in the United States. These include King and Snow crab caught in Alaska, Dungeness crab caught along the West coast and Alaska, and Blue crab caught along much of the Eastern seaboard and the Gulf of Mexico. Total commercial landings of all crab species in the United States over the past decade have ranged from 275 to 350 million pounds per year with an annual dockside value between 400 and 550 million dollars.

The blue crab fishery is the largest crab fishery in the United States with over 150 million pounds landed on average with a value of over \$200 million in 2010. Dungeness crab is the second largest crab fishery with an average of 60 million pounds caught and a total value of almost \$140 million in 2010. Dungeness crabs are caught along much of the U.S. Pacific coast and a large portion of the catch is from Oregon and is the state's most valuable single-species fishery. King and snow crabs are highly valued commercial species mainly caught in Alaska.

Fresh and frozen whole crabs, sections or legs, and frozen, pasteurized or canned crab meat is also imported into the U.S. from many different countries around the world. For most of the past decade, between 150 and 200 million pounds of crabs, 15 to 30 million pounds of frozen or pasteurized crab meat, and 50 to 70 million pounds of canned crab meat were imported annually.

### **Blue Crabs**

Blue crab is the largest crab fishery in the United States.

Blue crab the mainly harvested in coastal bays and estuaries along much of the Atlantic coast and the Gulf of Mexico.

Blue crabs are important to areas like the Chesapeake Bay because of their ecological, economical and historical value.

### **Snow (Tanner) Crabs**

Snow crabs are fished at ocean depths of 240 to 600 feet.

Snow crabs can live up to 20 years.

Snow crabs are only found in the Bering and Chukchi Seas in Alaska.

### **Dungeness Crabs**

Dungeness crabs can live over 8 years and can reach a size of 9 inches across the shell

Dungeness crabs are named after a small fishing village on the Strait of Juan de Fuca in Washington State.

Commercial crab pots are placed at depths of 30 to 600 feet and most of the harvest occurs from December through February.

### **King Crabs**

King crabs are mainly found in Bristol Bay and in the Aleutian Islands in Alaska.

King crab is one of the most valuable seafood products harvested in the U.S. In 2009, the U.S. catch of 22.3 million pounds had a dockside value of over \$86 million.

The largest king crab on record had a leg span of nearly 5-feet across.

## Product Forms

Most crab species are available as either live whole crabs, fresh cooked whole crabs, or frozen cooked whole crabs, sections or single legs. Crabs can be found in the marketplace all year because of freezing and other storage techniques. Crab meat that has been picked from the shell is also a common and popular product form. Crab meat is available as refrigerated fresh, pasteurized, or frozen meat and is often packed in metal or plastic containers. The meat of various types of crabs harvested in the U.S. and many other countries around the world is also available as a canned product.

## Buyer Advice

As with any seafood product, buy crab and crab meat from a reputable source that has high standards for quality and sanitation. Live crabs should be alert and active in the tank and can be stored outside of water for a short period of time. Fresh and pasteurized crab meat must be refrigerated.

## Nutrition

All crab species are low in fat and a good source of protein. Like other marine species, crabs are rich in minerals like selenium and other nutrients. Some crab products that are brine frozen may have higher levels of sodium. Nutritional labels for two common species of cooked crab are provided.

## Management and Sustainability

Most crabs are caught using traps or 'crab pots'. In most fisheries, regulations specify the type of crab pots that can be used to ensure that appropriate size crabs are caught, escape panels are used to reduce by-catch, and biodegradable rings are incorporated to prevent ghost fishing. Ghost fishing is a term used when lost gear is able to continue to catch marine life. Both the King and Snow (tanner) crab fisheries are managed by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. King crab populations are healthy and snow crab populations are rebuilding under current regulations. About 99% of the Dungeness crab in the U.S. market is from domestic sources, and the Tri-State Dungeness Crab Project allows the Fish and Wildlife agencies from California, Oregon and Washington to consult on issues affecting the commercial fishery. The Dungeness crab fishery was the first crab fishery to achieve Marine Stewardship Council status. The blue crab fishery is also primarily managed by state regulations with interstate cooperation. For example, in the Chesapeake Bay, the Bi-State Blue Crab Advisory Committee which includes the states of Maryland and Virginia in collaboration with the Chesapeake Bay Commission oversees the management of the blue crab fishery.

## References:

National Marine Fisheries Service 2011, [Fisheries of the United States, 2010](#). [2]

[NOAA FishWatch](#) [3]

## Sidebar Image:

# Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 3 oz (85g)  
Blue Crab, cooked, moist heat

## Amount Per Serving

**Calories 70**      **Calories from Fat 5**

**% Daily Value\***

<b>Total Fat</b> 0.5g	<b>1%</b>
Saturated Fat 0g	<b>0%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 80mg	<b>27%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 340mg	<b>14%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 0g	<b>0%</b>
Dietary Fiber 0g	<b>0%</b>
Sugars 0g	

**Protein 15g**

Vitamin A 0%      •      Vitamin C 4%  
Calcium 8%      •      Iron 2%  
Vitamin D 0%      •      Selenium 50%

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Calories per gram:

Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

# Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 3 oz (85g)  
Dungeness Crab, cooked moist heat

## Amount Per Serving

**Calories 90**      **Calories from Fat 10**

**% Daily Value\***

<b>Total Fat</b> 1g	<b>2%</b>
Saturated Fat 0g	<b>0%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 65mg	<b>22%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 320mg	<b>13%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 1g	<b>0%</b>
Dietary Fiber 0g	<b>0%</b>
Sugars 0g	

**Protein 19g**

Vitamin A 2%      •      Vitamin C 6%  
Calcium 6%      •      Iron 2%  
Selenium 60%

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
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**Source URL:** <https://www.seafoodhealthfacts.org/description-top-commercial-seafood-items/crab>

### **Links**

[1] <https://www.seafoodhealthfacts.org/description-top-commercial-seafood-items/crab>

[2] <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/fus/fus10/index.html>

[3] <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/>