

Dungeness Crab With Bacon-Cider Sauce

From Good Fish: Sustainable Seafood Recipes from the Pacific Coast

This is a sophisticated dish that I pull out in the fall as a first course to impress my family from back East, especially when they start in on the 'blue crab is better than Dungeness' rhetoric. If you live in the Pacific Northwest, it is likely that you can make this dish with ingredients raised or grown very close to home: world famous Washington apples, Pacific Dungeness, and locally cured bacon.

1 pound Dungeness crabmeat
4 strips good quality bacon cut into small dice
1 apple such as Gala or Granny Smith, sliced horizontally into 4 ½ inch slices through the core (remove the seeds with the tip of a knife, leaving the pretty star pattern)
1/3 cup small diced onion
Pinch of salt
½ cup dry white wine
1/3 cup clam juice
¼ cup apple juice or cider
Heaping ¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
1 teaspoon minced fresh lemon thyme or regular thyme
1 Tablespoon unsalted butter
1 teaspoon minced fresh tarragon
Cayenne (optional)
Maldon sea salt, for garnish (optional)

Double check the crabmeat for any stray bits of shell. Place it in a medium bowl over another bowl partially filled with very hot tap water. Locate 4 nice, large leg pieces to use as a garnish and set aside. Cover the top bowl. After 5 minutes, give the crabmeat a gentle stir. You want it to be room temperature or slightly warm when you serve the dish.

In a small skillet over medium high heat, add the bacon. Cook the bacon until its fat is rendered and it is crisp, about 10 minutes. Remove the bacon with a slotted spoon to a paper-towel-lined plate and set aside, reserving the fat. Pour the bacon fat through a fine mesh strainer into a cup. Clean the skillet and place it back on the stove over medium-high heat. Add the bacon fat back to the skillet and when it is hot, carefully slip the apples into the

pan. Fry them until one side is nicely caramelized, 3-4 minutes; then flip and cook them for 30 seconds more. Transfer to a plate and keep warm.

Without cleaning the skillet, add the onions and salt, and cook over medium-high heat, scraping up any stuck-on bits. Cook until the onions are lightly browned, about 5 minutes. De-glaze the pan with the white wine, clam juice and apple juice. Add the pepper and lemon thyme. Bring the sauce to a boil and reduce by half, about 5 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat, then swirl in the butter, tarragon, and cayenne. Taste and check for seasoning.

Serve each person a quarter of the crabmeat, placing it in the center of a warm plate. Place an apple slice (caramelized side up) to one side, leaning on the pile of crabmeat. Drizzle the sauce over the crab and apple, and garnish with some reserved bacon pieces and one piece of the reserved leg meat. Finish with a sprinkle of Maldon sea salt.