

BROWNE TRADING COMPANY

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Stone Crab Claws

(*Menippe mercenaria*)

WILD CAUGHT



Catch Region

Florida - State & Federal Waters

Seasonality

October to March

Catch Method

Trap & Pots

Yield

Approximately 2.5 Lbs of Cooked Claws yields One Lb of Meat

Flavor Profile:

Sweet and Mild,

Texture Profile:

Firm

Substitute:

- Lobster Meat
- Peekytoe Crabmeat

**A MONTEREY
BAY AQUARIUM
"BEST CHOICE"**

ALTHOUGH THE ATLANTIC STONE CRAB CAN BE FOUND IN WATERS AS FAR NORTH AS CONNECTICUT, THE BEST CLAWS COME FROM FLORIDA. It is here where the vast majority of the commercial harvest takes place, in areas as far south as the Florida Keys to Sarasota in the Gulf of Mexico. So named for their extremely hard shells, the claws of the stone crab are a coveted delicacy, with a flavor and texture that is often compared to lobster. Unlike other crabs such as Maine's "Peekytoe", the Chesapeake Blue, or the Pacific Dungeness, stone crabs are harvested strictly for their claws – and not picked for their leg and body meat. But the success of this Fishery relies on the Stone Crab's natural ability to regenerate its claws – up to 3 or 4 times in its lifetime. It is for this reason that the taking of live crabs are illegal in Florida; instead, only the claws are taken and the crab is released alive back to the wild to grow new claws and potentially end up in the pot again for harvest.

Stone crabs are oval in shape and dark, reddish in color, with two very large claws – their "crusher" claw being the larger of the two, and the one most selected for harvest. In nature, stone crabs lose their limbs frequently when attacked by predators or moving into restrictive spaces. Their regrowth is estimated to take one to two years to occur. Egg-bearing female crabs are not allowed for harvest. In order to be legally harvested, the claws must be 2 ¾ inches in length from their "elbow"- or first joint - to the tip of the lower immovable claw (or "finger"). Fishermen are allowed to remove both claws if they are legal size, but most take only the more robust "crusher" and return the crab with one claw to aid in its survivability. Harvest methods are trap or pots only – the use of spears or hooks are strictly forbidden.

Stone crabs are cooked immediately upon harvest – usually dockside by the fisherman or processor. This prevents the meat from sticking to the shell. They are then sold fresh, or immediately frozen. Because of their sweet tasting, firm meat, stone crab claws need little or no embellishment and are served very simply: cold with drawn butter and lemon, or with cocktail sauces, mayonnaises or vinaigrettes. Their meat can also be picked and use in salads or rolls. When purchasing frozen claws, it is highly recommended to only thaw in refrigeration as abrupt exposure to temperature can greatly diminish their flavor.

Stone crab claws are available as **MEDIUMS** (5-8 per Lb), **LARGES** (3-5 per Lb) **JUMBOS** (3 per Lb) and **COLOSSOLS** (1-2 per Lb). Subject to Availability.

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