

Alive and kicking

Selecting, preparing and cooking your live mud crab

The Queensland Government has developed best practice guidelines for the handling and storage of mud crabs from harvest to table. These guidelines were developed as a way to reduce the stress levels of muddies, decrease mortality after harvest and to increase the eating quality of the catch.

This fact sheet provides information for **consumers** on choosing a live mud crab, preparing and cooking it for the table.

Selecting your live crab

- Handle carefully! Claws are dangerous and can cause serious injury!! If in doubt seek assistance from shop staff.
- Make sure the crab is firmly tied, lively and not blowing bubbles from its mouth.
- Confirm it is full of meat by checking shell hardness and other signs of age as in Figures 1-4 (see over).
- Meat yield ranges from 20% of total live weight in a newly moulted "B" grade crab up to 35% in a full "A" grade crab.
- Keep your crab cool (18°-25°C), moist and out of direct sunlight and breeze.

Cooking

- Humanely kill the crab either by:
 - putting it in the freezer for 20 minutes
 - putting it in an ice slurry for 30 minutes
- Boil salty water and cook for 20 minutes per kg from when the water returns to a rapid boil.
- Cool in salty, iced water for 90 minutes as the meat continues to cook in the shell.
- Alternative cooking methods include steaming, poaching in milk or in camp fire coals.



Cleaning and preparing cooked crab

- Clean the shell of the crab under running water with a brush.
- Lift the tail flap and push your thumb under the top shell near the flipper and pull the shell off the crab.
- Remove the gills, guts and mouth parts from the body, rinse out any muck from the inside.
- Remove the claws from the body.
- Crack each portion of the claws with a sharpening steel or the back of a knife (Figure 5).
- Enjoy!

More information

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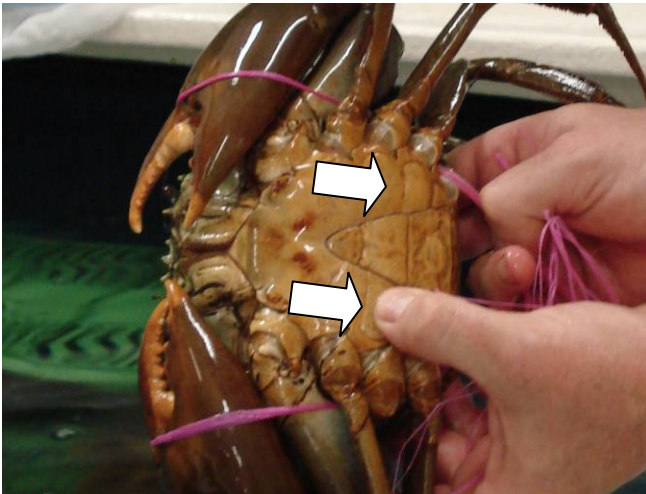


Figure 1. Checking a male mud crab.
The crab is not full of meat if there is any flex when the abdominal plate adjacent to the 2nd walking leg is pressed.

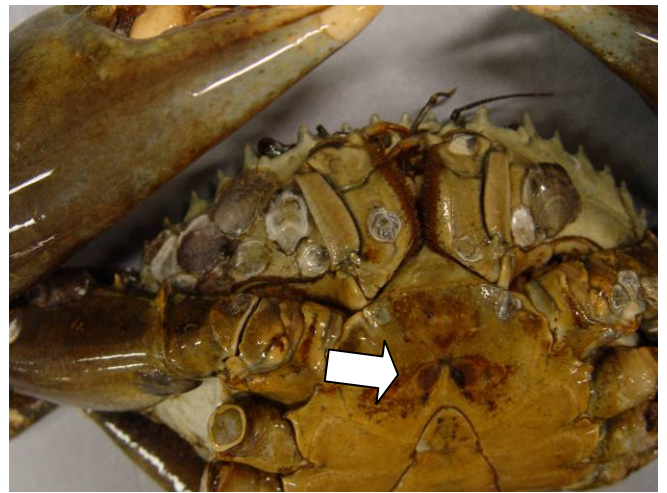


Figure 3. Signs of an older male crab.
Mating scars (arrowed) and barnacles indicate the crab has not moulted recently and is more likely to be full of meat.

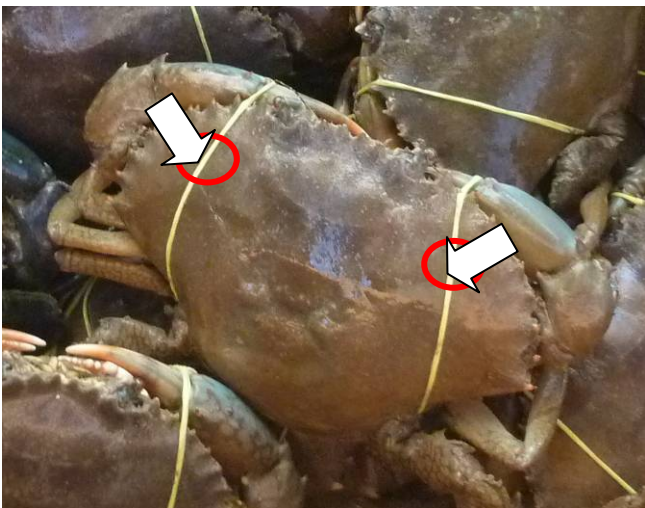


Figure 2. Checking a female crab (Take of female mud crab is prohibited in Qld).
Any flex or clicking sound when areas circled are pressed indicates a newly moulted female crab not full of meat.



Figure 4. Newly moulted crab.
A crab with a clean, semi-transparent shell and no wear on claw teeth is less likely to be full of meat.



Figure 5. Cracked claws.
Crack claws near the nippers to reveal the meat from a full crab.