

PREPARING DUNGENESS CRAB FOR SERVING

Harold Barnett, Arnold Einmo, and Roy Stevens

The general public is unfamiliar with the techniques used in preparing Dungeness crab for the table. This article provides that information. Procedures for cooking, cleaning, and cracking Dungeness crab are described and illustrated. Several popular Dungeness crab recipes are included.

The Dungeness crab, sometimes referred to as the San Francisco or Pacific crab, occurs in abundance on the Pacific coast from California to Alaska. Annual commercial catches of 30 million pounds or more are common.

The crabs grow to be comparatively large; frequently, they attain weight of $3\frac{1}{2}$ to $4\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. Weights of average individual crabs, however, are closer to 2 pounds.

Dungeness crabs are marketed in a variety of forms. These include live crab; whole, cooked crab (fresh and frozen); cooked sections (fresh and frozen); cooked meats (fresh and frozen); and heat-processed canned meats.

The body and leg meat from the Dungeness crab has a distinctive flavor and a delicate texture. Because of its fine flavor and texture, seafood gourmets find Dungeness crab dishes delightful.

Dungeness crabs have always been a popular seafood on the Pacific Coast, but until recently they have been relatively unknown in other parts of the country. Improved methods of transportation, however, have carried them to markets in the Midwest and on the East Coast, where they have been eagerly received by seafood fanciers. The general public, however, is unfamiliar with the techniques used in preparing Dungeness crab for the table.

Presented here are methods of cooking Dungeness crabs, cleaning and cracking them, and preparing Dungeness crab dishes.

I. COOKING DUNGENESS CRABS

To cook sufficient crabs for 6 servings:

1. Obtain 2 or 3 live crabs.
2. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of table salt to 8 quarts of fresh water, and heat the water to boiling.
3. Place the crabs in the boiling water.

4. After the water returns to a boil (the crabs will momentarily lower the temperature of the water below boiling), cover the pot, and cook the crabs for 15 to 20 minutes.

5. Remove the crabs from the pot, cool them in tap water, and drain them.

II. CLEANING AND CRACKING DUNGENESS CRABS

Clean and crack the cooked crabs in the following manner:

1. Remove the back (Figure 1).
2. Remove the gills (Figure 2).
3. Remove the mouth parts (Figure 3).
4. Remove the viscera from the body cavity by washing it in cold, running water (Figure 4). The yellowish fatty portion, or "crab butter," covering the viscera can be saved for later mixing in to salad dressing (optional).
5. Remove the tail flap (Figure 5) from the underside of the crab.
6. Place your hands on either side of the crab body (Figure 6), and press the body with a rolling motion to loosen body segments (optional).
7. Break the crab into halves, right and left.
8. Separate the legs (Figure 7) in such a manner that the adjacent body segment is attached to each leg.
9. To remove the body meat, grasp each leg as shown in Figure 8, and strike the leg against the side of the bowl.
10. Using a wooden mallet (Figure 9), crack each leg section.
11. Peel off the broken shell (Figure 10), and remove the meat.
12. To recover meats that do not shake out readily, use the tip of a crab leg as a pick (Figure 11).

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Fig. 1 - Removing the back.

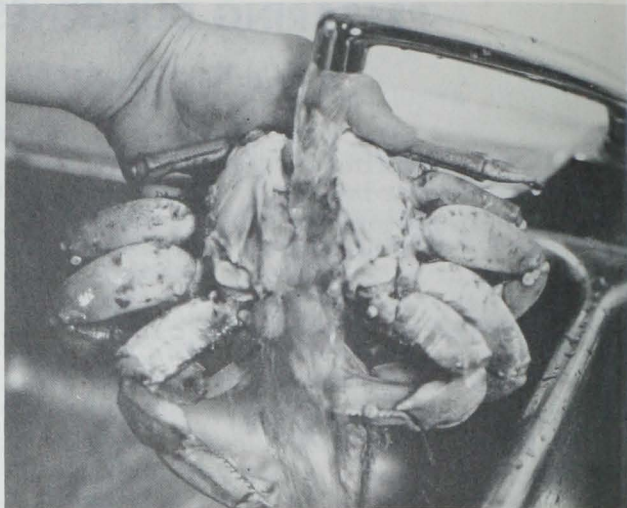


Fig. 4 - Removing the viscera with cold, running water.

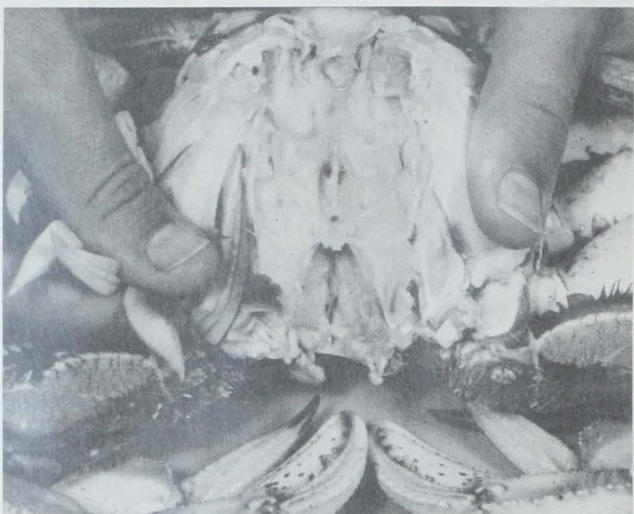


Fig. 2 - Removing the gills.



Fig. 5 - Removing the tail flap from the underside of the crab.



Fig. 3 - Removing the mouth parts.

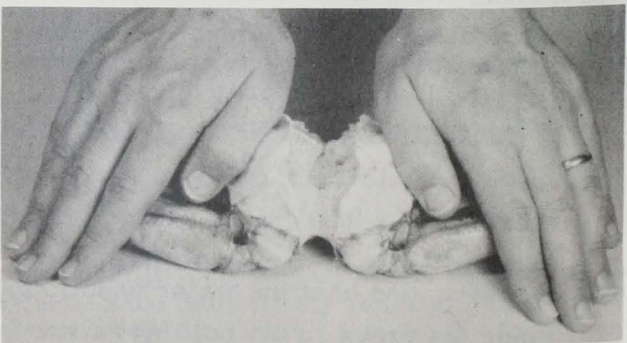


Fig. 6 - Loosening the body segments (optional).

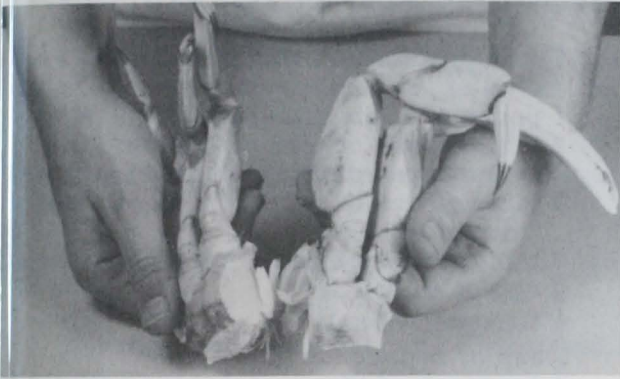


Fig. 7 - Separating the legs from the body.

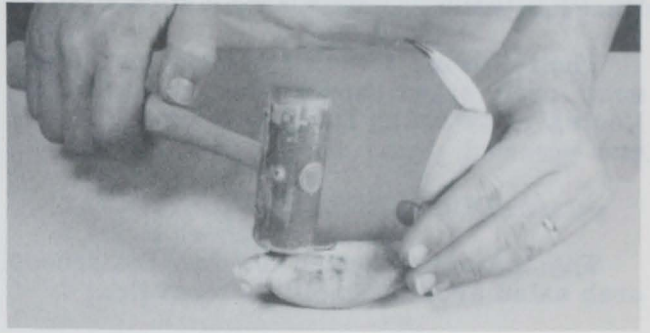


Fig. 9 - Cracking the shell from a leg portion.

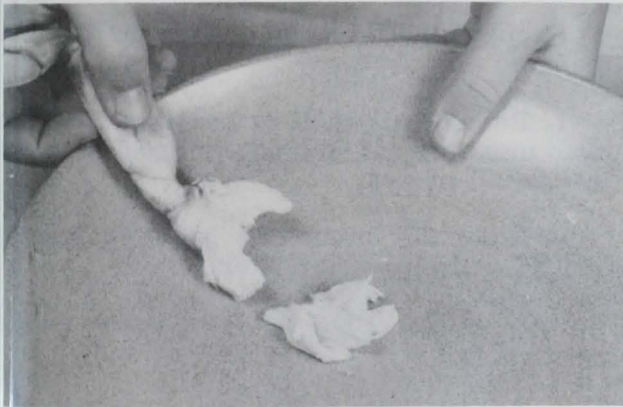


Fig. 8 - Shaking body meat from a leg portion.

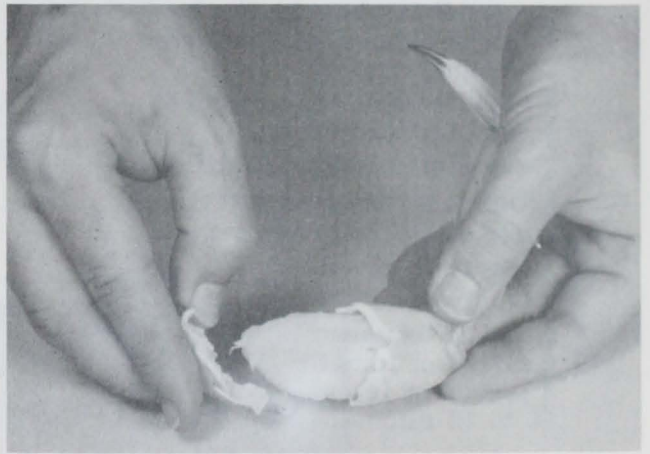


Fig. 10 - Peeling off broken shell.



Fig. 11 - Using the tip of a crab leg as a pick.

III. PREPARING DUNGENESS CRAB DISHES

The following 3 tested recipes on Dungeness crab salad, imperial crab, and crab Louis¹ make eating Dungeness crab a pleasure.

A. DUNGENESS CRAB SALAD

The ingredients used in the Dungeness crab salad are:

- 1 pound of Dungeness crab meat
- 1 can (14 or 15 ounces) of artichoke hearts, drained
- 1 can (8 ounces) of cut green beans, drained
- 2 hard-cooked eggs, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of sliced celery
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sliced raw cauliflower
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sliced cucumber
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sliced green pepper
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of pepper
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of thousand island dressing
- 6 slices of tomato
- 6 leaves of lettuce
- 10 to 15 slices of radish

Prepare the Dungeness crab salad in this way:

1. Remove all shell or cartilage from the meat of the crab; be careful not to break the meat into small pieces.
2. Cut the crab meat into pieces one-half inch long.
3. Cut the artichoke hearts into fourths.
4. Combine all the ingredients except the tomatoes, lettuce, and radishes.
5. Toss the combined ingredients lightly.
6. Arrange a slice of tomato on each leaf of lettuce, and place about 1 cup of salad on each slice of tomato.
7. Garnish the salad with the slices of radish.

The amount of salad suggested serves 6 people.

¹These and other crab recipes prepared by Bureau of Commercial Fisheries home economists are in a publication, Test Kitchen Series No. 10, "How to Cook Crabs." The publication may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

B. IMPERIAL CRAB

The ingredients for imperial crab are:

- 1 pound of crab meat
- 2 tablespoons of chopped onion
- 2 tablespoons of chopped green pepper
- 3 tablespoons of butter or other fat, melted
- 2 tablespoons of flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of salt
- Dash of pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of Worcestershire sauce
- 2 hard-cooked eggs, chopped

Prepare the imperial crab in the following manner:

1. Remove all shell or cartilage from the crab meat; be careful not to break the meat into small pieces.

2. Sauté the onion and green pepper in butter until they are tender.

3. Blend the flour into the sautéed onion and pepper.

4. Add milk gradually, and cook the mixture, with constant stirring, until it is thick.

5. Add the seasoning, egg, and crab meat.

6. Place the imperial crab preparation in 6 well-greased individual shells or in 5-ounce custard cups.

7. Bake the crab preparation in a moderate oven (350° F.) for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the preparation is brown.

The amount of imperial crab suggested serves 6 people.

C. CRAB LOUIS

Supplied here are the recipes for crab Louis and for the Louis dressing to be used in the recipes.

1. Recipe for Crab Louis

The ingredients for crab Louis are:

- 1 pound of crab meat
- 1 head of lettuce
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of salt
- 1 cucumber, sliced
- 4 tomatoes, sliced
- 3 hard-cooked eggs, sliced

Prepare the crab Louis in this manner:

1. Remove all shell or cartilage from the meat of the crab; be careful not to break the meat into small pieces.

2. Shred the lettuce, and place it in a large, shallow, salad bowl.

3. Sprinkle the components of the salad with salt.

4. Arrange the crab meat over the lettuce.

5. Place alternate slices of cucumbers, tomatoes, and eggs around the edge of the salad bowl.

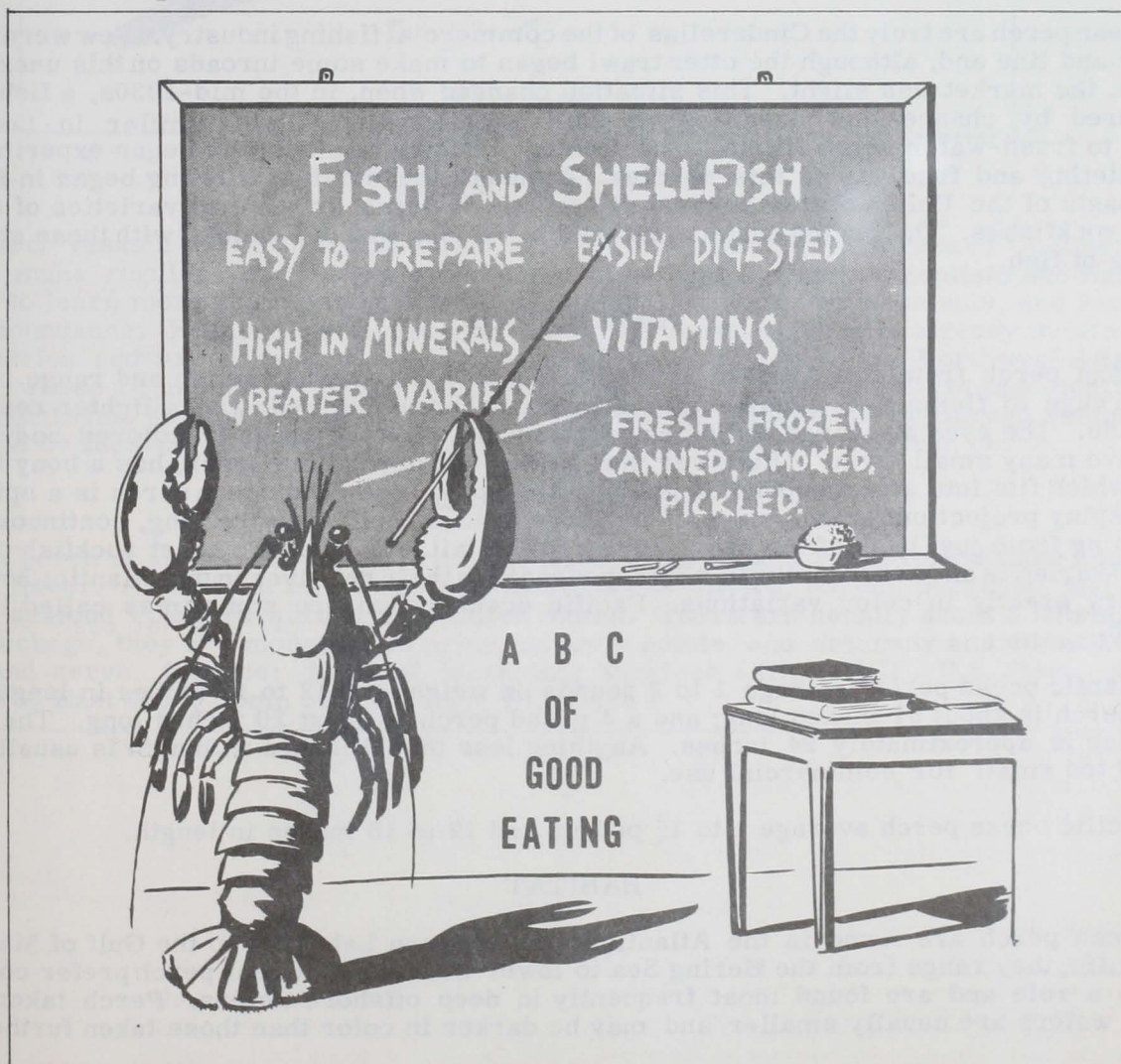
6. Spread Louis dressing over the crab meat.

2. Recipe for Louis Dressing

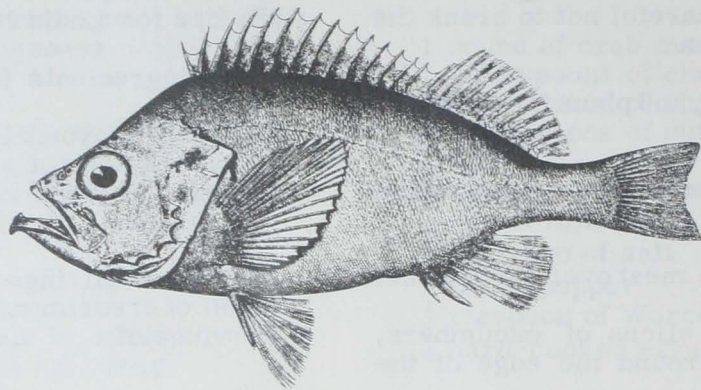
The ingredients for Louis dressing are:

- 1 cup of mayonnaise or salad dressing
- 3 tablespoons of catsup
- 2 tablespoons of chopped sweet pickle
- 1 tablespoon of lemon juice

Combine all ingredients and chill. The amount of dressing suggested is sufficient for 6 servings of crab Louis salad.



FOOD FISH FACTS



OCEAN PERCH

(Sebastes marinus) -- Atlantic*(Sebastes alutus)* -- Pacific

Ocean perch are truly the Cinderellas of the commercial fishing industry. Few were caught by hook and line and, although the otter trawl began to make some inroads on this unexploited species, the market was slight. This situation changed when, in the mid-1930s, a fish cutter discovered by chance that ocean perch yield small white fillets similar in taste and texture to fresh-water perch fillets. The fishing industry immediately began experimenting with filleting and freezing of this species. Although the original filleting began in Boston on both coasts of the United States harvest either ocean perch or several varieties of closely related rockfishes. The fishing industry entered a "Golden Era of Fishing" with these abundant families of fish.

DESCRIPTION

Ocean perch from the Atlantic are also called redfish or rosefish and range in color from orange to flame red, occasionally grayish or brownish red, with a lighter red on the belly side. The eyes are large and black, contrasting with the brightly colored body. Both jaws have many small teeth. The lower jaw, jutting out beyond the upper, has a bony knob at its tip which fits into a corresponding notch in the upper jaw. The ocean perch is a spiny fish having spiny projections on the sides of the large head as well as on the long, continuous dorsal fin running from just back of the head almost to the tail. The Pacific coast rockfish number about 50 varieties and are very similar in appearance to their relatives in the Atlantic; however they vary greatly in color variations. Pacific ocean perch are sometimes called longjaw rockfish.

Atlantic ocean perch average 1 to 2 pounds in weight and 12 to 15 inches in length. A 1 pound perch is about $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches long; and a 4 pound perch is about 20 inches long. The maximum size is approximately 24 inches. Anything less than 8 inches in length is usually considered too small for commercial use.

Pacific ocean perch average 1 to $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds and 12 to 16 inches in length.

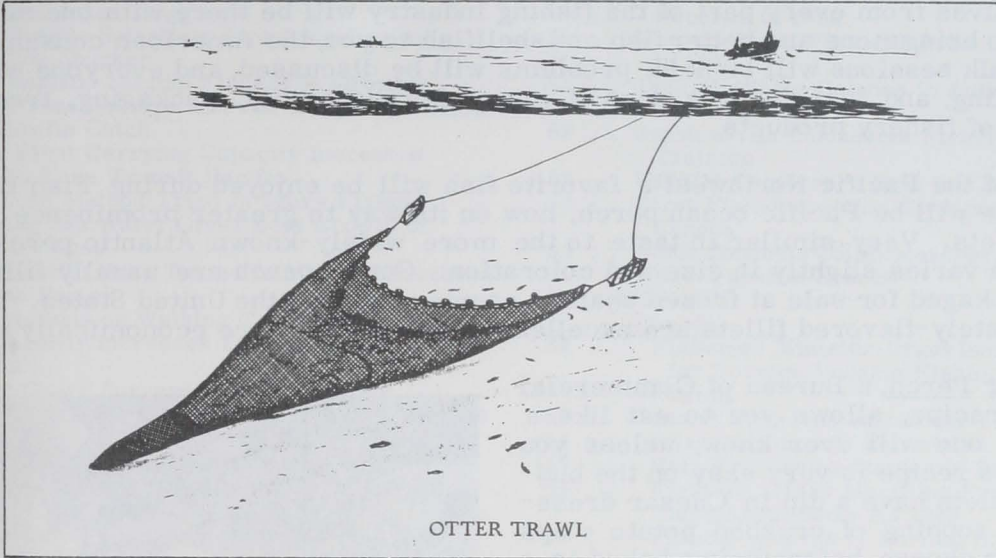
HABITAT

Ocean perch are found in the Atlantic from southern Labrador to the Gulf of Maine; in the Pacific, they range from the Bering Sea to lower California. Ocean perch prefer cold waters as a rule and are found most frequently in deep offshore waters. Perch taken from coastal waters are usually smaller and may be darker in color than those taken further out.

(Continued following page)

OCEAN PERCH FISHING

Otter trawls are the most commonly used gear in the Atlantic coast fishery for ocean perch, with a trawling depth of approximately 300 to 750 feet. In the Pacific, the high-opening otter trawls are the most effective because the Pacific varieties do not congregate so close to the bottom as other species of these families.



OTTER TRAWL

CONSERVATION

Research vessels of the United States Department of the Interior's Bureau of Commercial Fisheries make regular information gathering cruises which enable scientists and fishery biologists to learn more about ocean perch and other fish, their environments, and factors affecting abundance. Regulations controlling trawl net mesh sizes are already in effect in the fisheries and are a part of the International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries, whose 14 members include the United States, Canada, and 12 European countries. The present time studies are being made and regulations considered by Bureau scientists which might be incorporated through ICNAF to prevent the depletion of ocean perch.

USES OF OCEAN PERCH

Ocean perch is an excellent food fish. The flesh, when cooked, is white and flaky and has delicate flavor. Almost the entire catch of these fish is filleted, frozen, packaged, and sold at frozen seafood counters across the United States. There are usually about 8 fillets to a pound package, they are moderate in price, entirely edible, and are easy and attractive to prepare and serve. (Source: National Marketing Services Office, BCF, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 100 East Ohio, Room 526, Chicago, Ill. 60611.)

SEATTLE SEAFOOD SPECTACULAR

The nation's fishermen did not go down to the sea in ships October 5-8 but to Seattle, Washington, for the biggest Annual American Fish Exposition ever to be held. From a regional beginning in Boston three years ago, Fish Expo has grown nationwide, and in 1969, with many foreign countries joining in, will be the largest and finest fisheries exposition in the world. Congressmen, fishermen, wholesalers, retailers, advertisers, and representatives from every part of the fishing industry will be there with one main objective--how to bring more and better fish and shellfish to you, the American consumer. Seminars and talk sessions will be held, problems will be discussed, and everyone will be listening, looking, and learning new ways of improving the quality, packaging, transporting and selling of fishery products.

Many of the Pacific Northwest's favorite fish will be enjoyed during Fish Expo 1969. Among these will be Pacific ocean perch, now on its way to greater prominence in the nation's markets. Very similar in taste to the more widely-known Atlantic perch, Pacific ocean perch varies slightly in size and coloration. Ocean perch are usually filleted, frozen, and packaged for sale at frozen seafood counters across the United States. The white, flaky, delicately-flavored fillets are excellent eating and they are economically priced.

Chipper Perch, a Bureau of Commercial Fisheries recipe, allows you to eat like a king and no one will ever know, unless you tell, that this recipe is very easy on the budget. The fillets have a dip in Caesar dressing, then a topping of crushed potato chips and Cheddar cheese before being baked in a hot oven. Chipper Perch is meltingly tender after only 10 to 15 minutes baking and ready to serve with its crunchy cheese crown. This recipe offers a whale of an idea for the homemaker--feed the family like royalty while saving money and preparation time.

CHIPPER PERCH

2 lbs. ocean perch fillets or other fish fillets, fresh or frozen	1 cup crushed potato chips
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Caesar salad dressing	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese



Thaw frozen fillets. Dip fillets in salad dressing. Place fillets in a single layer, skin side down, on a baking pan, 15 x 10 x 1 inches. Combine crushed chips and cheese. Sprinkle over fillets. Bake in an extremely hot oven, 500° F., for 10 to 15 minutes or until fillets flake easily when tested with a fork. Makes 6 servings.

Chipper Perch is one of 25 quick-fix recipes, some economy and some gourmet, 'Time For Seafood,' a full-color booklet published by the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries. All recipes have been especially planned to give you TIME--time to enjoy, time to relax, time to do your thing. For these flavorful ways to beat the clock, send 45¢ to the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 and ask for 'Time For Seafood,' Fishery Market Development Series No. 12 (I 49.49/2:12). (Source: National Marketing Services Office, BCF, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 100 East Ohio Street, Room 526, Chicago, Ill. 60611.)