

## HOW TO

### CRACK A LOBSTER

*You just need a couple of simple tools and a little confidence.*

EXTRACTING THE SWEET, succulent meat from a steamed lobster's shell can make for an awkward dining situation. But after I moved from California to the East Coast more than 30 years ago, it took only a few instructional dinners at a local lobster joint to elevate me from novice to initiate. Now, I savor the entire creature confidently, in all its buttery glory. Following the simple steps here, you can, too.

This is one of the rare foods that is actually more challenging to eat than it is to prepare. Steaming a lobster couldn't be simpler, and the accompaniments are just as easy to throw together, whether you're melting butter or turning out a batch of homemade mayonnaise. In a pinch, even Hellmann's—with a few goodies mixed in—provides supremely edible results.

The recipe at right for melted butter infused with shallots, citrus zest and parsley pairs brilliantly with a steaming-hot lobster straight from the pot, while the curry-cilantro mayonnaise is my go-to when serving the scrumptious shellfish chilled. You can adapt both recipes with abandon: The possibilities are as wide as what your garden, farmers' market and pantry have to offer.

—Gail Monaghan



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Illustration by Michael Hoeweler for The Wall Street Journal*

#### STEAMED LOBSTER

Total Time: 20 minutes serves: 4  
Add 1 inch of salted water to a 6- to 8-gallon stockpot with a tight-fitting lid and insert a steamer basket. Cover pot and bring water to a boil over high heat. // Place 6 live 1½-pound lobsters in steamer basket and cover pot tightly. After 7 minutes, use tongs to rearrange lobsters in pot. Replace lid and let steam 7 minutes more. Remove one lobster and break it open where the body meets the tail. Meat should be creamy white with no transparency. If not, allow lobsters to steam 2-3 minutes more. // Serve lobsters hot with small bowls of melted butter, lobster crackers and small forks. If serving cold, refrigerate until needed and serve with mayonnaise.

#### PARSLEY-CITRUS-SHALLOT BUTTER

Total Time: 15 minutes makes: 2½ cups  
Melt 4 sticks unsalted butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add 2 large shallots, finely minced, and cook, stirring frequently, until softened, 3-5 minutes. Add 3 teaspoons lemon zest and 2 teaspoons orange zest and cook, stirring, 1 minute more.

Off heat, stir in ½ cup finely minced Italian parsley and salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste.

#### CURRY-CILANTRO MAYONNAISE

This mayonnaise will have more flavor if made a day—or at least a few hours—ahead, covered and refrigerated until ready to use. Be sure to bring all the ingredients to room temperature before preparing.

Total Time: 5 minutes makes: 1¾ cups

Place 1 egg, 1 clove garlic, 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice, ¼ teaspoon salt, a few drops of Tabasco, 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard, 1 tablespoon curry powder and ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper in a food processor and process until well blended. // In a separate bowl, combine ¾ cup canola or other neutral oil and ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil. With motor running at medium-low, add oil mixture to food processor, drop by drop initially and then in a very slow stream. When mayonnaise is thick and all oil has been added, add 1 small bunch cilantro, roughly chopped, and pulse to combine. Add more lime juice, salt, pepper or curry powder to taste.