

The boys in the boat and a crab feast

Crab béchamel with corn and buckwheat crepes

BY DAVID CAMPICHE

The storm kicked up just as the crab fishermen launched their ocean boats and began to drop their 200 pound pots.

If you've never stood atop a swaying deck in 20-foot seas as the wind slaps your raw face and chafes your hands — then you haven't experienced the Pacific Ocean in December. And you are lucky for that, this happens to be one of the most dangerous professions in the world. I, for one, am grateful every time I that am served this exceptional seafood, particularly from a safe port of call.

The Dungeness crab is a winter delight, or perhaps a highlight. The lean sweet meat is as pleasing as any protein in the world. I love to crow on this seafood: its taste and texture. With three in the sink, I begin the slow process of extracting meat from shell. I don't find the process unpleasant, any-more than I mind cleaning a razor clam. I simply enjoy the meal all the more for my efforts.

My wife, Laurie suggested crab béchamel with corn and buckwheat crepes. How could I not comply? Especially since she offered to make the crepes!

Crab Béchamel with Corn and Buckwheat Crepes

Sauce ingredients

- 2 tablespoons of butter
- flour
- 1 and 1/2 cup of milk
- 3 tablespoons cream
- 1/2 cup of hard white cheese (Gruyere is one of the best)

Directions

Simply melt two tablespoons of butter in a sauce pan. When melted, add flour and stir until the mix is incorporated and cooked, but without excessive browning. Slowly add a cup and a half of milk and a few tablespoons of cream. Incorporate the ingredients and continue to stir for a couple of minutes. This takes away the pasty taste of the flour. I often use half virgin olive

oil with half the butter. When the sauce is smooth, add a one-half cup of hard white cheese. Thin with a bit of water if the sauce becomes too thick.

Known as a mother sauce, béchamel can be modified by simply adding cheese, preferably a hard cheese like Gruyere or Swiss. With that and a pinch of nutmeg, you have a mornay sauce.

Because of my luck — a gift of three Dungeness crab — I added the crab to the mornay and finished with some fresh cilantro, salt and pepper and a few drops of Tabasco.

Corn Buckwheat Crepes ingredients

Yields 11 10-inch crepes

- 1/4 cups buckwheat flour
- 1/3 cups corn meal (fine ground)
- 2/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 6 eggs
- 3/4 liter whole milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 medium ears of corn, boiled for eight minutes and removed from cob

Directions

Combine flours in a bowl and whisk to blend. Then add the eggs, one at a time, stirring to remove lumps.

Whisk in milk gradually and add salt, pepper and cilantro. Let mixture set for at least one hour.

Add the cooked and cooled corn and stir to combine.

Heat crepe pan over medium-high heat. Using a combination of vegetable oil and butter, brush the crepe pan lightly.

Adjust heat if pan is too hot. Pour enough batter onto the pan to allow it to flow to the sides and fill the pan to the edges. Cook over medium to medium-high heat until crepe is nicely browned on each side, about three minutes per side. Move finished crepe to a plate and place sheets of waxed paper between each crepe, as this makes for easy removal.



Laurie Anderson

The finished and plated crab béchamel with corn and buckwheat crepes.



David Campiche

Savory crab béchamel simmers on the stovetop.