

Crab Cakes with Ravigote Sauce

For 8 cakes or 4 servings

In the hearts and minds of diehard seafood lovers, few dishes command the affection held for crab cakes. While Maryland's crab cakes hold sway along the eastern seaboard, Louisiana's spicier versions don't lack for fans. This recipe produces especially delicate pan-fried crab cakes enlivened with Creole seasonings and a hint of pepper sauce. A small amount of freshly made, soft breadcrumbs makes them light in texture, so much so that they must be prepared gently so they don't fall apart. But it's the crabmeat that's the star of the show.

- 1 pound jumbo lump crabmeat,* picked over
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped red sweet peppers
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped green sweet peppers
- 1 tablespoon minced green onions, green parts only
- 1 teaspoon Creole seasoning
- 1 teaspoon Louisiana pepper sauce
- 1 teaspoon worcestershire sauce
- ½ teaspoon table salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ⅓ cup mayonnaise
- 2 large eggs, divided
- 3 cups fresh soft breadcrumbs, divided
- 1 cup whole milk
- 2 cups all-purpose flour, seasoned with 1 teaspoon table salt and ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ⅓ cup clarified butter
- ½ recipe ravigote sauce with crabmeat
- 1 tablespoon minced chives or Italian (flat-leaf) parsley leaves, for garnish

*If this ingredient is difficult to find where you live, see Ingredient Sources on page 424.

1. In a large mixing bowl combine the crabmeat, red and green sweet peppers, green onions, Creole seasoning, pepper sauce, worcestershire sauce, table salt and pepper. Lightly but thoroughly mix with a fork, being careful to keep the lumps of crabmeat intact.
2. Gently blend in the mayonnaise and one lightly beaten egg, then 2 tablespoons of the breadcrumbs. Taste the mixture and adjust seasonings to your liking. Cover and refrigerate for one hour.
3. Line a cookie sheet or shallow pan with parchment paper. Shape the chilled crabmeat mixture into eight equal-size balls, using a rounded ¼-cup measure for each ball. Place them on the parchment-lined sheet or pan.

ADVANCE STEPS

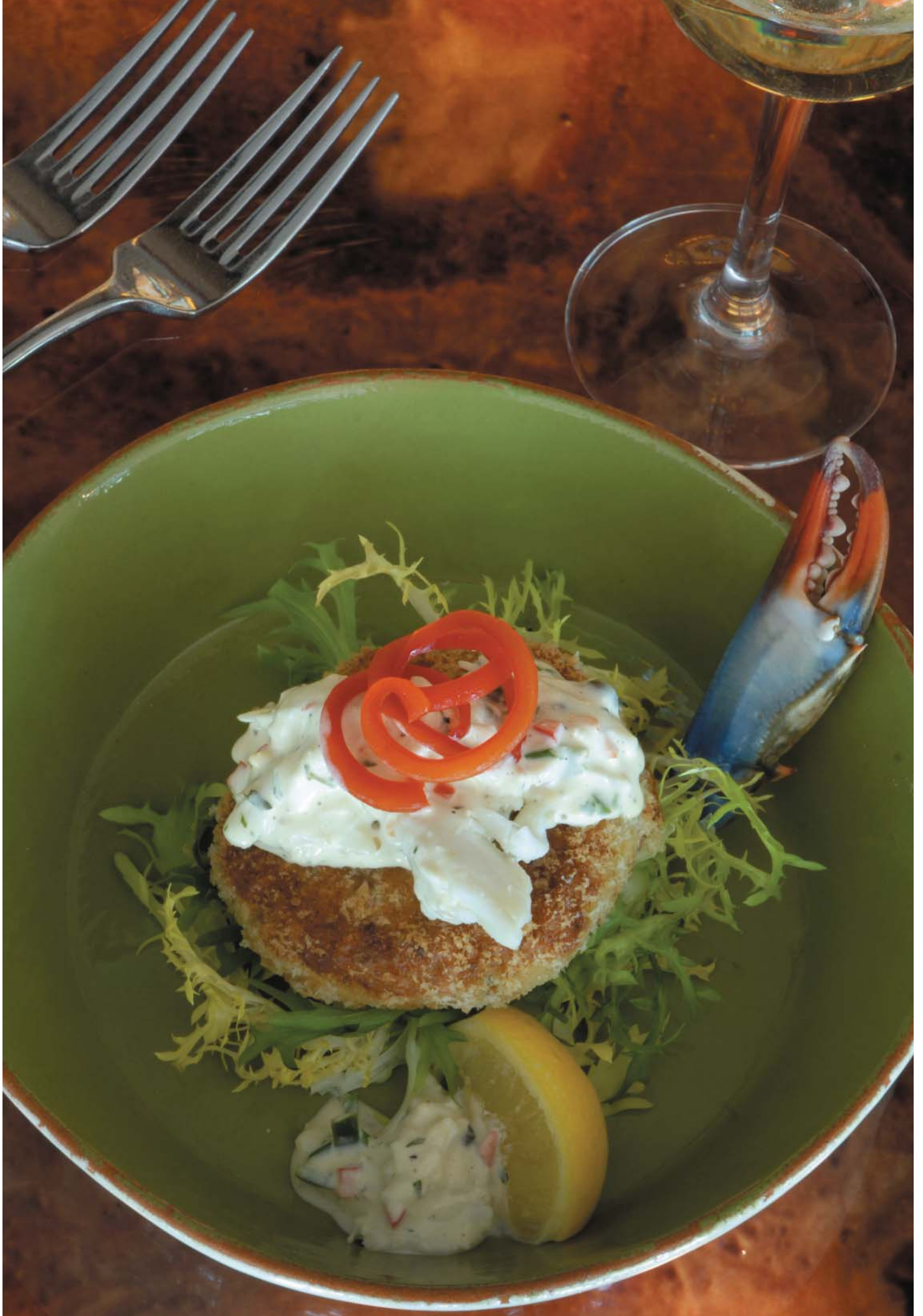
Prepare the recipes for:

- Creole seasoning on page 385
- Fresh soft breadcrumbs on page 382
- Clarified butter on page 355
- Ravigote sauce with crabmeat on page 372

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

- A cookie sheet or shallow pan
- Parchment paper
- 3 rimmed baking sheets (1 to hold breaded crab cakes and 1 on which they will bake)
- A heavy 12-inch sauté pan or a heavy 12-inch skillet





-
4. Refrigerate the crab balls for about three hours, until they are firm enough to hold together well. Keep them refrigerated until you are ready to continue with the recipe.
 5. Preheat the oven to 350° F.
 6. In a small mixing bowl, lightly whisk together 1 egg and the milk to make egg wash.
 7. Place the seasoned flour in a pie pan, and the remaining scant 3 cups of bread-crumbs in a separate pie pan in a separate pie pan. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. One at a time, gently and lightly dust the chilled crabmeat balls in the flour, then quickly moisten all over with the egg wash, letting excess liquid drain off. (Do not leave the crabmeat balls sitting in the egg wash or they will fall apart.)
 8. Gently roll the crabmeat balls in the breadcrumbs and place them on the prepared baking sheet.
 9. Heat the clarified butter in a heavy 12-inch sauté pan or heavy skillet over medium heat for about three minutes, being careful not to burn the butter.
 10. Meanwhile, line another rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. The baking sheet should be large enough to hold all the crabmeat balls, each separated by about an inch. Form the crabmeat balls into cakes about $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch thick, pressing them gently together to make them fairly solid, and place them on the prepared baking sheet.
 11. Pan-fry four of the cakes in the heated butter, placing them in the sauté pan at least a half-inch to an inch apart, for about three minutes or until the undersides are nicely browned.
 12. With a spatula, gently turn the cakes over and brown the other sides, about two minutes more. As the cakes brown, transfer them to a third parchment-lined baking sheet.
 13. Repeat Steps 11 and 12 to brown the remaining four crab cakes.
 14. Bake the cakes uncovered just until they are cooked through and lightly plumped, five to seven minutes.

Serving Suggestions: Top each crab cake with a dollop of ravigote sauce and a sprinkle of chives or parsley.

Serve warm, allowing two cakes per serving. **S**