

Crawfish Stock

For about 9 cups

This recipe begins with a crab stock. Fresh live crawfish are purged and crushed to be added, along with seasonings, to the crab stock. The final product is a full-flavored stock that may be used in virtually any crawfish recipe that includes a stock.

- 5 tablespoons clarified butter
- 4 pounds live, purged crawfish (see Advance Steps, right)
- 10 cups crab stock, divided
- 1 cup finely chopped onions
- 1 cup finely chopped green sweet peppers
- ½ cup finely chopped celery
- 1 cup chopped Creole* tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste

*South Louisiana's Creole tomatoes are preferred for this recipe, although other good, peak-of-season regional varieties can be used.

1. In a heavy 8-quart saucepan with a lid, heat the clarified butter over very high heat until very hot, two to three minutes. Slip the purged crawfish carefully into the saucepan, and quickly cover the pan. Reduce heat to high and cook three minutes, then uncover pan.
2. Add 2 cups of the crab stock and cook for about 15 minutes. During this cooking time, and using a heavy-duty kitchen mallet or sturdy mixing spoon, firmly press the utensil down on each crawfish to crush its shell into the smallest bits you can. This will take roughly eight minutes to do and should produce a good, earthy crawfish aroma and a liquid that has a pleasant crawfish flavor, which is essential to ending up with a stock that tastes of crawfish essence. As you are crushing the crawfish, be careful not to slosh the hot liquid in the pan on you.
3. If the liquid in the pan reduces to about ½ cup before the 15 minutes cooking time has elapsed, and if you have crushed the crawfish shells sufficiently, proceed to Step 4. If not, add 1 cup of the remaining 8 cups crab stock to the pan and cook a little longer while crushing the shells more thoroughly.
4. Now add the onions, sweet peppers, celery and tomatoes, stirring thoroughly. Stir in the tomato paste and cook for one minute.
5. Add the remaining 7 or 8 cups crab stock and bring mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered, for 40 minutes.

ADVANCE STEPS

Prepare the recipes for:

- Clarified butter on page 355
- Crab stock on page 391

Just before preparing the crawfish stock, purge the 4 pounds of live crawfish according to the instructions on page 35.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

- A heavy 8-quart saucepan or 8-quart Dutch oven with a lid
- A heavy-duty kitchen mallet or sturdy mixing spoon
- A coarse-mesh strainer or colander
- A sturdy ladle
- A fine-mesh strainer*

*If a fine or very fine strainer is not available, do the last straining through several layers of cheese-cloth.

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6. Remove from heat and let the mixture cool about five minutes.
 7. Next, strain the stock in batches through a coarse-mesh strainer (or colander) placed over a pan or heat-proof mixing bowl, pressing on the shells and vegetables firmly with the back of a sturdy ladle to extract all liquid possible. Discard the shells and vegetables in the strainer after straining each batch.
 8. Next, strain the stock through a fine-mesh strainer (the finer the better) or through several layers of cheesecloth. If needed, strain the stock again to make sure it is completely free of tiny shell particles.

Serving Suggestion: Use the stock immediately or allow it to cool down and store it in the refrigerator overnight or in the freezer for up to one month. **S**

