

Louisiana Seafood Boil

For 8 to 10 servings

Generations of New Orleanians have feasted on crabs and shrimp in their shells boiled with lemon and spices. Some do it outdoors with a butane burner, consuming the shellfish at a table covered with newspapers and—if the table needs protection—lined with a plastic cover. Just as often, the festive event begins indoors on a stovetop, with everyone gathered at the kitchen table. Cold beer is the preferred beverage, but white wines—especially those with a bit of sweetness that can stand up to the spices—also pair well with the shellfish. Alsatian whites such as Gewürtztraminer and Riesling are local favorites.

A dipping sauce is a popular accompaniment to a seafood boil. Two good ones are a seafood cocktail sauce (see the recipe on page 366), and a Creole rémoulade sauce (see the recipe on page 373).

- 12 quarts cool water
- 4 large onions, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 4 celery stalks, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 10 lemons, cut in half
- 5 bulbs of garlic, with tops cut off just enough to expose the flesh of the pods
- 2 cups kosher salt
- ½ cup Zatarain's brand liquid crab boil seasoning*
- 1 pouch Zatarain's brand dry-spice crab boil seasoning*
- 10 whole small bay leaves
- ⅓ cup whole black peppercorns
- 1 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
- 2 pounds andouille sausage, cut into 2-inch-long pieces**
- 1 dozen live jumbo-size crabs
- 5 pounds whole (with heads and shells) large shrimp

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

**Smoked or Polish sausage (kielbasa) may be substituted for the andouille.

1. Place all the ingredients except the crabs and shrimp in the boiling pot. Over high heat, bring the liquid to a boil.
2. Reduce the heat and simmer 10 minutes.
3. Add the crabs one at a time, holding them carefully with tongs to avoid being pinched. Let the liquid return to a simmer and cook for five minutes.
4. Add the shrimp and let the liquid once again return to a simmer.

NOTES

Crabs and shrimp are called for in this recipe, but crawfish are eligible for inclusion, too.

For an added treat toss in raw medium whole potatoes, shucked corn on the cob, whole green-globe artichokes or even franks for the kids. These will absorb the spicy flavor of the liquid.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

- A 5-gallon or larger boiling pot
- A pair of large tongs
- A large strainer
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5. When the final simmer point is reached, turn off the heat and let the shellfish steep, uncovered, for 10 minutes.
 6. When the steeping is complete, promptly remove the shellfish and andouille from the pot with a large strainer and allow them to cool for a few minutes.

Serving Suggestion: Serve on platters or trays with cracking tools. **S**