

In Season- Stone Crabs, Florida's Gift from the sea

October symbolizes the true reason that we all congregate to this tropical paradise. Not only is it national seafood month, October also boasts the start of Stone Crab season. From late October to mid May, (depending on the late season storms) Stone Crabs claws are the feast of Southwest Florida. Indigenous to the warm waters of Florida and the Bahamas, Stone Crabs are to the dining scene what Maine Lobsters are to a New Englanders. Since stone crab claws are cooked immediately after harvesting, to prevent the meat from sticking inside of the shell, they are best served chilled with the infamous musrad sauce.

Store cooked crabs and picked meat in the coldest part of your refrigerator or "meat keeper" at 32 degrees F and use within two days.

Stone crab claws that are intact (occasionally claws crack during handling) can be frozen at 0 degrees F for up to six months.

Thaw frozen stone crab claws in the refrigerator for 12 to 18 hours. If thawed under running water quality will be lost.

Recipe for Oct.

From Chef Judi's Kitchen:
Stone Crab and Shrimp Ceviche
Serves 6

2 mangos, peeled, pitted and diced
1 can mandarin oranges
1 avacado, peeled and chopped
¼ cup mango nectar
Juice from 6 regular oranges
Juice of 2 key limes
Zest of one lime
3 Tablespoons red onion, finely diced
½ red pepper- julienne
1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar
1-Tablespoon white balsamic vinegar
1 pound peeled and deveined shrimp cooked and chilled
1 ½ pounds stone crabs, meat removed
1-teaspoon wasabi powder
Pinch sea salt
Fresh ground white pepper

Slice shrimp lengthwise. Set aside. In a large glass bowl, combine all ingredients and blend well. Taste to adjust seasoning. Add shrimp and set at room temperature for 30-40 minutes. Mix gently twice before serving. Serve in martini glass and add stone crab meat