

FROM THE SEA

BAKED STUFFED LOBSTER

New England Style

By Bob Skolnick

Photography by Marty Snortum Studio

There's nothing finer than a fresh Maine lobster baked, broiled or boiled. Some of your local supermarkets and specialty stores have saltwater lobster tanks where you can choose your own lobster for your dinner party. Other stores that do not have a saltwater tank can order in fresh Maine lobsters for you on their fresh seafood days. Recently we featured a company called Maine Lobster Direct in Portland, Maine that allows you to order lobsters by phone (800-556-2783 or online at www.mainelobsterdirect.com). This company will pack and ship your lobsters to you overnight, directly to your door.



Wherever you get your lobsters, it is essential they are purchased alive, and should be cooked and eaten with 30 hours after you bring them home. Preferably, cook and eat them on the same day you get them. The way to assess the lobster's freshness is to hold it from the back of its head (likely its tail will be curved closed). Try to open the tail, and if you meet reasonable resistance, the lobster is not only alive but is fresh, and should be squirming around a bit. If the lobster is limp and not moving, it is dead and should not be cooked or eaten. When storing your lobsters, note they breathe through specialized gills that let them take oxygen from both the water and air. In order for the gills to work in the air however, they must be kept wet. For this reason when storing and handling them, they need to be kept both damp and cool (between 36 and 40 degrees F is ideal). Typically they are shipped with seaweed, which provides them with moisture. If properly stored, they can remain alive for several days out of water.



Baked Stuffed Lobster

Serves 4

- 4 Maine Lobsters (1¼ to 1½ lbs each)
- 16 oz unsalted butter
- 8 each raw shrimp (15-20 count)
peeled, de-veined, and cut into ½ inch pieces
- 4 oz fine diced celery
- 4 oz fine diced onion
- 2 oz minced garlic
- 16 oz fresh bread cubes cut from
a soft crust French bread loaf
- 6 oz cooking sherry wine
- 2 tsp paprika
- 2 each fresh lemons
- salt and pepper to taste

1. Melt your unsalted butter and set aside 8 ounces for use as a dipping sauce for the lobster meat. Place the other 8 ounces of the melted butter in a heavy bottom sauté pan and bring to medium heat. Add the diced celery and sauté for a few minutes. Add the diced onions and minced garlic and sauté for a few minutes more. Add the shrimp pieces and continue to sauté until they turn firm and pink. Turn up the temperature and add the 4 ounces of cooking sherry and bring to a rapid simmer.

2. Remove the vegetable, butter and wine mixture from the stove and slowly toss in the cubed breadcrumbs in with the vegetables, butter and wine until the bread cubes are soft and have absorbed the liquid, much like you would when making regular bread dressing. If you need to add more moisture, a little mild chicken stock compliments the seafood flavor. Season with salt and pepper to taste. When the dressing is finished, cover and set aside in a warm place.

3. To prepare the lobster for baking, take a baking sheet that has at least half-inch deep sides and line with aluminum foil. Lay the lobster on its back (legs will be up). Take a French knife and insert the tip of the blade in the center of the breast bone and with a fulcrum type motion cut down through the chest and through the center of the tail. Turn the knife around and cut back towards the head.

4. You should now have the lobster cut from its head to the tip of its tail. Spread the lobster open firmly. You will likely hear the crack of the outer shell so the lobster will lay flat. There are two things that need to be removed: the center vein and the sack right at the top of the head. Everything else is edible. You can now remove the rubber bands that hold the claws shut.

5. Brush the inside of the lobster cavity with a little salted butter and then loosely pack the lobster cavity to include the tail with your seafood bread stuffing. Sprinkle a little paprika on top.

6. Place the lobster in a preheated 350 degree oven for 30 minutes. Serve immediately with hot drawn butter and lemon halves.

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