

# Crawfish & Rice

If you spend any time in south Louisiana you'll soon encounter crawfish, a small and tasty relative of the lobster, also called mudbugs, crayfish or crawdads in certain parts of the country. Surprisingly, crawfish are not just popular in the United States. They have long been a delicacy for Northern Europeans, but crawfish scarcity in Europe makes them very expensive.

When Europeans came to North America they found vast numbers of crawfish in the lower Mississippi valley. The huge swamp areas of Louisiana provide almost unlimited habitat. Louisiana accounts for about 98% of the known annual crawfish harvest in North America, and this is where they have the greatest cultural impact. In south Louisiana, crawfish are an institution, and it's said that here crawfish is "king."

Many people enjoy crawfish dishes which include rice, and Louisiana farmers often rotate their field use, growing rice one year, then flooding the same field to raise crawfish the next year. The crawfish thrive by foraging on the rice crop residue and stubble. Crawfish droppings fertilize the field in preparation for the next year's crop of rice. Over 100,000 acres in Louisiana are farmed in this crawfish-rice rotation.

December through June is crawfish harvest season, and the best time to gather with friends for a crawfish boil! At this popular social gathering the crawfish are boiled in salty, well-seasoned water along with potatoes and corn on the cob. Some people add sausages, and even artichokes to the water. The standard serving is about five pounds per person (about 100 crawfish) - an unheard-of quantity in Europe. The crawfish boil is often the culmination of a sport-crawfishing outing by a family or group of families.

Several crawfish festivals are held each spring in south Louisiana and East Texas. The largest is in the town of Breaux Bridge, near Lafayette. Breaux Bridge calls itself the crawfish capital of the world. The festival includes the selection of a queen, a parade with floats including a ten-foot-long paper-mache crawfish, crawfish races, crawfish peeling and eating contests, and a contest for the largest crawfish. It's said that some large bets are often placed on the outcome of these contests.

There's no limit to creativity in Louisiana crawfish cooking. You might enjoy such popular dishes as crawfish pie, etoufee, jambalaya and bisque...or even crawfish stew, crawfish stuffed peppers, fried crawfish tails and eggrolls stuffed with crawfish. So...when in Louisiana, don't be shy - try a new crawfish dish!

## Source(s):

[http://www.ricefarming.com/home/2008\\_AprilRotation.html](http://www.ricefarming.com/home/2008_AprilRotation.html)

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