

# Cromer Crab



'Cromer crab' refers to the brown crab that is caught off the North Norfolk Coast along the chalk reef on the seabed. The chalk reef is over 20 miles long, stretching from just west of Weybourne to Happisburgh in the east. It starts about 200m offshore and extends out as far as 10km offshore.



Crown copyright

The chalky bed makes for cleaner water that the crabs live in and filter in to their system. This makes for a sweeter taste than crabs caught on a muddy seabed.

Cromer crabs are caught in pots, a sustainable method, as it means the crabs are caught live, and can be checked against minimum size requirements and released back into the sea alive if they are too small.

This ensures that each crab has had at least one breeding season before it is caught and cooked, meaning we will continue to have this delicious food source for a long time.

Cromer Crabs are allowed to be slightly smaller than other brown crabs in the UK, but have a higher proportion of white meat.

Crab has been caught in Norfolk for centuries and is still an important part of the local economy. In 1887, the combined population of Cromer and Sheringham was 2,760, and of those, 450 men and 94 boys were involved in the fishing industry. At the time the fishing industry here was more diverse, including fishing for cod, plaice, skate, herring, whelk and shrimp, as well as crab and lobster. Today the focus is almost wholly on crab and lobster. In 2016 there were still twenty boats plying their trade from Cromer and Sheringham beaches, several fishmongers in the towns, and a processing plant in Cromer.

The crabs and lobsters were originally caught by hoop nets which were sunk to the bottom of the sea and pulled up by hand. The



'crab pot' was introduced in around 1862-3. These pots are of creel type, having a base constructed of a rectangular wooden frame surrounding a cast iron weight, known locally as a 'music'. The sisal or nylon net is attached to hoops of hazel or cane. The pot has two opposite openings or "spouts", one at each side, joined by a single tunnel of netting through which the crab or lobster enters and falls through a hole into the pot. The bait is held between toggles in two 'bait bands' which are double lengths of stretched twine fitted from the roof to the base of the pot. The catch is

removed through the roof of the pot which opens.

The UK is a net exporter of crab, sending most of its catch to Spain and France. Cromer crab is readily available throughout Norfolk, both from fishmongers and in restaurants, cafes and pubs.

# Crab & Lobster Festival

The Crab & Lobster festival is a lively weekend celebration in Cromer & Sheringham, dedicated to promoting our local seafaring heritage and the still-active fishing community. The festival celebrates our proud crab and lobster delicacies, as well as local restaurants, chefs, crafts, etc. As part of the festival, which takes place in May, an art trail is installed throughout both towns and remains in place until August Bank Holiday weekend, when the works of art are auctioned off and there is a crabbing competition on Cromer pier that is open to the public.

## Try Crabbing Yourself

Crabbing kits can be bought in most gift shops throughout North Norfolk, and you can go crabbing off the pier in Cromer or from the quays along the coast such as Blakeney or Wells-next-the-Sea.

1. All you need is a piece of string or line, a weight and bait. Try not to use nets and hooks – they're very unsporting. Dynamite and blunderbusses are actively discouraged.
2. This is a sport of quality not quantity. The goal is to get the heaviest specimen.
3. **Look after your catch in water-filled buckets until the game is over and they are returned, unharmed, to their natural habitat.**
4. Tie the bait (perhaps fish like mackerel, particularly the heads, or bacon or even dough soaked in whisky) to the end of your string, with the weight tied just above. Lower to the bottom and wait. By all means do the 'Huckleberry Finn' and tie the other end of the string to a toe and just lay back and relax. When you feel a tug, pull... but very, very slowly.
5. Be patient. If the crab thinks it's in the speedy elevator going up The Shard in London it will drop off. And you'll be left at square one.
6. When you pull one up successfully (and you will!), handle it from the back. The things that pinch are at the front!

# Where to buy Cromer crab

<b>Cromer</b>	<b>Mundesley</b>
Davies Fish Shop - Garden Street	The Lobster Pot - Back Street
J Lee Crabstall - New Street	<b>Cley</b>
JWH Jonas Fishmongers - New Street	Cley Smokehouse - High Street
<b>Sheringham</b>	<b>Blakeney</b>
CA Seafoods - Station Road	Blakeney Crab Shed - New Road
Joyful West's Shellfish Bar - High Street	Willie Weston's Fish Shop - Westgate St
Sheringham Market - Station Road	<b>Wells Next-the-Sea</b>
<b>Briston</b>	A&M Frary - The Quay
Norfolk Sea Larder - Mill road	Arthur Howell Fish—Staithe Street

## Sources

Jonas Seafoods

Visit North Norfolk

The Big Prawn

Wikipedia

Eastern Daily Press

Norfolk-Norwich.com

Slow Foods

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Information correct at time of printing. This guide is not exhaustive and inclusion should not be taken as a recommendation. Please contact us to contribute updates and additions.

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