

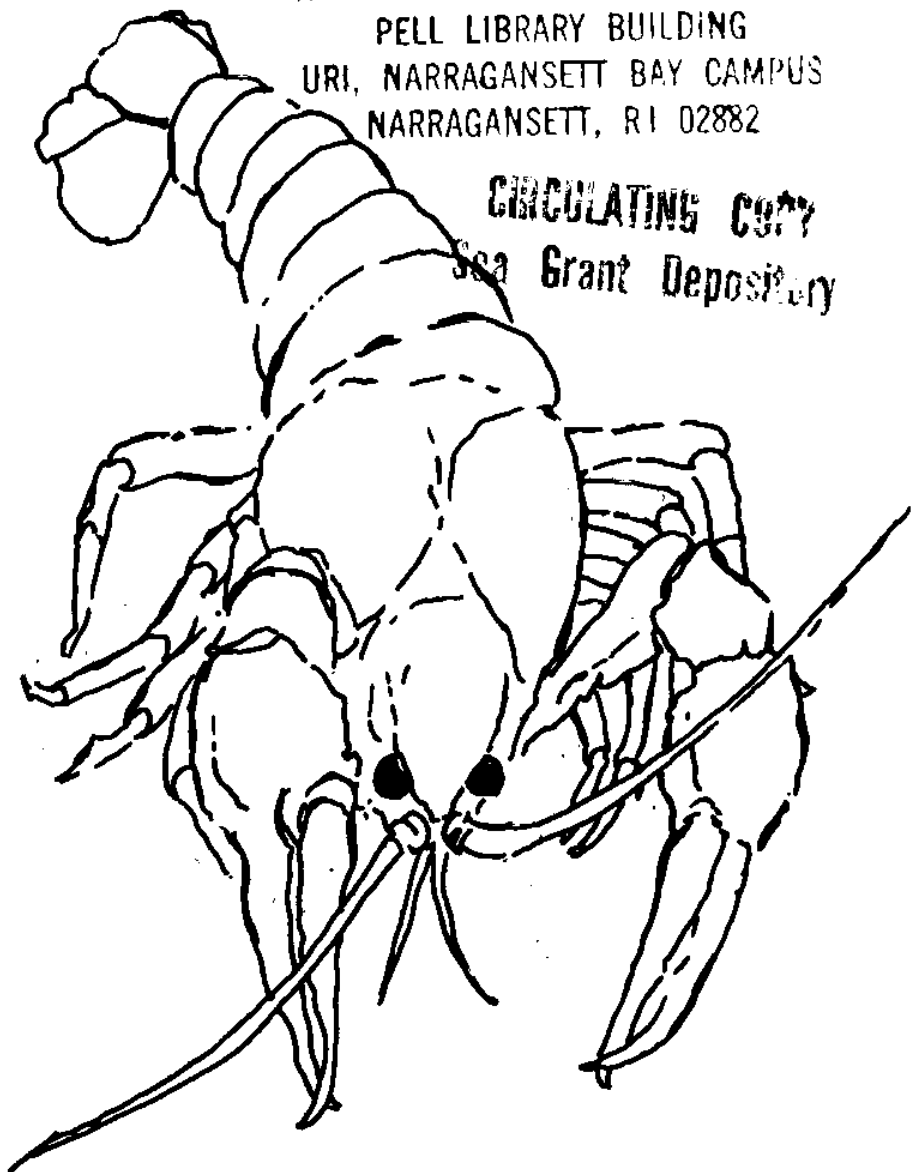
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A "TAIL" OF SUCCESS

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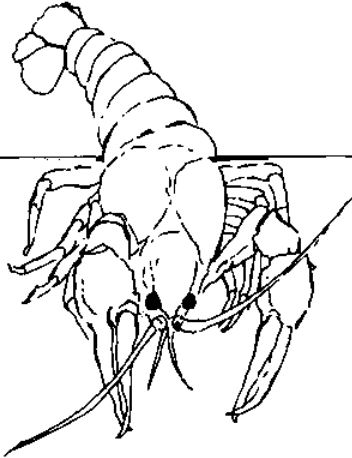
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**TEXAS FARM-RAISED,
PURGED CRAWFISH**

Once a food common only in Bayou country, crawfish is becoming a popular shellfish elsewhere. People are finding out how delicious high quality crawfish can be.

Customer satisfaction with crawfish will be determined in part by the quality of crawfish which you purchase. This brochure outlines ways to evaluate the quality of crawfish and obtain maximum shelflife from each shipment.



Wild-caught crawfish come into season in Spring generally from March to June. They are first sold locally in southeast Louisiana and, as production peaks, are exported to Texas and surrounding areas. As rapidly as the wild crawfish season peaks, it plummets.

Crawfish farming provides a much longer season and a more consistent source of product. Generally crawfish are available from November through the end of May. In fact certain technological advances in storage may make crawfish available year round.

Texas crawfish farmers have made a long-term commitment to raise and market a consistently high quality product by only selling purged crawfish.

At certain times of the year, the lure of cheap crawfish presents itself. But, since your reputation stands behind every meal you serve, buying that cheap, inferior crawfish may be the most expensive decision you will ever make. Be sure. . . with Texas pond-raised, purged crawfish the new "tail" of success.

Why is "Purging" Important to Crawfish Quality?

To purge means to free from impurities . . . to purify. Crawfish farmers have adopted the extra step of purging to provide consumers with a superior-tasting, hardy animal with a longer shelflife. Here's how purging works.

After crawfish are harvested from ponds they are placed in holding tanks which contain clean, free flowing water. In the purge tank crawfish naturally reduce the size of their characteristically gritty sand vein. Reducing the size of this vein minimizes off-odors and off-flavors. Purging also allows crawfish to "bathe," removing any mud which may have adhered to the shell and gills during harvest. This is why a sack of purged crawfish will provide a true weight and not soil coolers and holding areas. Also, purged crawfish have a longer shelflife because cleaned gills allow the animal to transfer air efficiently. In essence, purging dictates how the animal will taste, how long it will stay alive, and how clean your preparation area will stay! Purging, is the most important determinant of quality!

Price Usually Indicates Quality

There is no mandatory public sector inspection or grading of fish and seafood except for clams, oysters, mussels and blue crabmeat. That makes buying fish and seafood a classic case of buyer beware. Since there is no mandatory inspection, no common language exists to describe quality. Often this leads to deals "almost too good to be true" from vendors offering cheaper than usual products. These products are usually inferior in quality. When products are marketed live, inferior quality most often means a greater number of dead animals unsuitable for consumption. ***Dead animals should be discarded because you do not know whether they have been dead for two hours or two days.***

Maintaining Crawfish Quality

LIVE CRAWFISH should stay alive about 4 days if handled properly. To ensure maximum life of the animals:

Store at 38°F.

Keep out of direct sunlight.

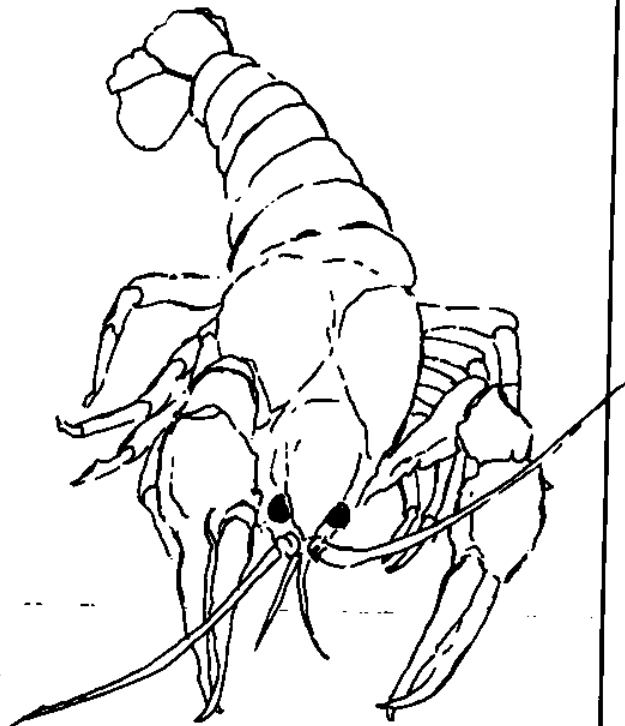
Do not drop sacks.

Always lay crawfish sacks on their sides, not upright.

Stack crawfish bags only two deep.

Do not spray with chlorinated water.

If crawfish are kept cool, there should not be any need to mist the animals between deliveries.



COOKED CRAWFISH should be kept under refrigeration. To ensure maximum shelflife, the temperature should be as cold as possible . . . 32°F is best.

When receiving live crawfish...

CHECK...

Condition of the bag

Outward appearance of animals

Presence and size of "sand vein" when removing the head

Liveliness of crawfish*

ACCEPT IF...

It is a loose mesh variety, is clean, free of discoloration and mud.

The underside is clean, with no soil or mud adhering to the animal.

The vein appears as an empty tube, or is difficult to find.

100 percent of the animals are alive.

REJECT IF...

It is tightly woven, muddy and contains extraneous material such as sticks, bait and the like.

The tail area is muddy.

You observe a black dot in the center of the tail (the vein similar to our intestine).

The bag contains more than 5-10 percent dead animals.

*Live crawfish will be mobile. When picked up the tail should curl under the body. Dead animals will have a drooping tail when handled.

When receiving whole cooked crawfish...

CHECK...

Packaging

Temperature

Odor

Presence of "sand vein"

Shape of the cooked tail

ACCEPT IF...

The crawfish is physically separated from raw products with suitable packaging.

The crawfish package is surrounded by ice and the temperature in the center of the package is 40°F or below.

The aroma is spicy with perhaps a very faint sour odor.

The vein appears as an empty tube or is difficult to find.

The tail is curled.

REJECT IF...

Cooked crawfish are packaged in a mesh bag without a suitable barrier.

The temperature of the meat is above 40°F.

The aroma is strong, sour or putrid.

The vein appears as a black line in the center of the tail.

The tail is straight.*

*A straightened tail on a cooked crawfish indicates the animal was dead when cooked. These crawfish should be discarded because you do not know how long the crawfish was dead before it was cooked.



*This brochure has been created as a public service by the
Texas A&M Sea Grant College Program on behalf of the
Texas Crawfish Farmers Association.*

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