



Stone Crab Fact Sheet



Image courtesy of fl-seafood.com

Basic Biology

Latin name: *Menippe mercenaria* (Florida stone crab) and *Menipe adina* (Gulf stone crab)

Range: from North Carolina south around the Florida peninsula and throughout the Gulf of Mexico to the Yucatan peninsula and Belize, throughout the Bahamas and Greater Antilles

Habitat: coastal estuaries and inlets, preferably in or around oyster reefs, out to depths of 200 ft

Diet: oysters, other bivalves and crustaceans

Age and growth: reproductively mature at 2 years; live 7-8 years

Sustainability

- These two species are closely related, can interbreed, and are managed as one population.
- In Florida, landings have been stable over the past 20 years and the number of juvenile crabs joining the adult population has not declined. This suggests that the population is fully exploited but is still sustainable.
- In South Carolina, there is no directed fishery for stone crab; they are taken as incidental catch in the blue crab fishery. No long-term studies exist to determine the status of the stone crab population; catch and effort data and fishery independent data are needed before the population can be assessed.
- In South Carolina only the larger of the two claws may be harvested and the claw must measure at least 2.75" in length. In Florida, both claws may be taken if they are both of minimum size, but claws cannot be removed from egg bearing females. Most female crabs have spawned once or twice before their claws reach the minimum harvest size.
- Stone crabs are harvested with traps or pots which tend to have a minimal impact on the environment if set properly. Bycatch, in the form of finfish and other invertebrates, is minimal and usually released alive. In Florida, traps must have a biodegradable panel to allow animals to escape if the trap is lost.

Info for Chefs

- The Florida stone crab season starts on October 15th and runs through May 15th. Most crabs are harvested along the Gulf coast and in the Florida Keys.
- In South Carolina, stone crab may be harvested year round but are most plentiful in summer.
- Ask your seafood purveyor for Florida stone crab or call Raul's Seafood (Shem Creek) at 843-388-8046 for South Carolina stone crab.

Info for Servers

- The claws of the stone crab are asymmetrical: there is one major or crusher claw and one minor or pincer claw. Both can get large enough to harvest.
- If the claw is removed properly (at the joint) the crab may regenerate it several times. Regeneration time is between one and three years, depending on the size of the crab. Samples of harvested claws in Florida showed that 13-20% of claws have been regenerated.

Sources: Wenner, Elizabeth. Stone Crab. SC Department of Natural Resources. www.dnr.sc.gov/cwcs/pdf/StoneCrab.pdf
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, Stone Crab documents: research.myfwc.com/features/category_sub.asp?id=5743