



Norwegian Red King Crab (*Latin name: Paralithodes camtschaticus*)

Of all species of shellfish, Norwegian Red King Crab is one of the most outstanding and impressive you can serve. The meat of the legs and claws has a natural sweet taste that can be simply boiled and served “au natural”, perhaps with melted butter for dipping. But if you want something a little more complex the meat is extremely versatile and can be steamed, broiled and baked. It works wonderfully with a variety of different spices and seasonings.

Norway's catches of Red King Crab account for only a small percentage of the world's total. Despite this, Norwegian Red King Crab is attracting attention in the world markets mainly because of its impressive size and superior meat quality. Norwegian Red King Crab weighs 4.3 kg on average, while crabs from the world's largest catching nation, Alaska, have an average weight of approximately 3 kg.

The fishing of Norwegian Red King Crab takes place in the northern part of Norway using small coastal vessels. The vessels carry a maximum of 30 crab nets and have a short distance to travel to reach the receiving facilities. This means that the crabs are caught in limited numbers, making it possible for the fisherman to handle each crab individually, reducing the stress and damage to the creature. These gentle, reduced-stress catching methods benefit both the condition and survivability of the crab, and when used throughout the entire chain, from catch to production, give the Norwegian Red King Crab a distinctive quality advantage.

History

The Red King Crab was introduced in the Murmansk Fjord in Russia in the 1960s and has since spread to large areas in the southern Barents Sea. The introduction of the Red King Crab was the result of a carefully planned, Russian-based programme. The distribution of Red King Crabs spanned several years, during which time thousands of crabs – both adults and fry – were transferred from the Sea of Okhotsk at the northwest arm of the Pacific Ocean to the Murmansk Fjord.

In the mid-1970s, individual Red King Crabs started turning up as by-catches in Norwegian waters and in the 1980s, an increase in these by-catches was registered. But it was in the spring of 1992 that for the first time, large numbers of Red King Crab were being caught in Norwegian waters, specifically in the coastal net and line fisheries in East Finnmark. In the autumn of 1992, King Crab was put on the agenda of the Norwegian-Russian Fisheries Commission. In the period from 1994-2001, there was a limited research catch, where Norway and Russia agreed on a total quota and divided this equally among themselves.

In the autumn of 2002, Norway started commercial catching of Red King Crab. At that time, 127 vessels were given licences to participate in the catching, and the quota was set at 100,000 male king crabs. When commercial fishing agreements were



adopted, the Joint Norwegian-Russian Fishing Commission followed by setting up principles of taxation for this catch. These principles describe, amongst other things, the degree of taxation, minimum size, catching period and equipment regulations. These principles of taxation were introduced with the intention of attaining a sustainable long-range return of the stock.

For 2005, the quota for Red King Crab in Norway is set at 280,000 male crabs. This is the same as the 2004 quota.

Biology

Red King Crab (*Paralithodes camtschaticus*), is a coldwater species that is found in shallow water and down to 500 metres depth, depending on age/size, gender and season. The crab is found in water temperatures of between -1.6 to +18° C. A general characteristic is that the juvenile crabs hide in shallow water amongst rocks and seaweed, while the adults and larger individuals go deeper and are found on sandy and muddy bottoms for much of the year.

The Red King Crab starts its life in the free, open water. The time from hatching of the egg and up until the young crab settles on the sea bottom takes about 100 days in our waters, somewhat dependent on the temperature and access to food. The small crabs live in shallow water in the seaweed belt where they find shelter from their enemies. This is where the crab will spend its first year of life before it starts migrating out into deeper water.

After 5-6 years, the Red King Crab reaches sexual maturity and in the spring, it moves into shallower areas to reproduce. The female Red King Crab does not have spermatophores (sperm containers) where sperm cells can be transferred long before ovulation. Therefore, the male crab has to be present during ovulation. In addition, the female has to spawn in connection with moulting of her shell because the shell has to be soft in order to drop the eggs out of the oviduct opening. When it is time for the female to drop her shell, the male crab actively helps in the process and fertilises the eggs.

The product

Norwegian Red King Crab is sold in the following product forms and all variants are available both fresh and frozen, either raw or cooked:

- Whole crab (only the innards in the carapace are removed).
- Clusters (a cluster is three legs and a claw that are joined).
- Single legs (individual legs and claws).

Regardless of the form Red King Crab is sold in, the colour in its raw state should be evenly brown on top and white/cream-coloured on the underside. There should be no flaws in the form of black spots, sores and/or discolouration/scraping on any parts of



the shell, whether it is the carapace, legs or claws. The crab should not have defects in the form of missing all or parts of any of its legs and/or claws.

Nutritional value

The nutritional value in the Red King Crab muscle is as follows:

Nutritional value	(gm/100gm)
Energy/calories	620 kJ/148 kcal
Protein	15.6 gm
Fat	0.6 gm
Carbohydrates	1.0 gm

Export of Norwegian Red King Crab

Export_Norwegian Red King Crab	Value (1000 NOK)			Quantity (1000 tonnes)		
	2003	2004	2005*	2003	2004	2005*
Østerrike	-	20	-	-	0	-
Belgia	979	2525	2156	5	14	12
Tyskland	356	386	419	2	2	2
Danmark	72	393	69	0	2	0
Spania	66	103	2	0	1	0
Finland	194	218	312	1	1	2
Frankrike	207	2	730	1	0	4
Storbritannia	697	1707	739	3	10	5
Hellas	-	1	-	-	0	-
Ungarn	64	108	-	0	1	-
Italia	-	188	-	-	1	-
Latvia	20	10	-	0	0	-
Nederland	839	9485	556	4	67	3
Sverige	676	1148	839	3	6	5
Sveits	1	59	16	0	0	0
Kasakhstan	-	4	-	-	0	-
Romania	-	-	23	-	-	0
Kina	-	1998	9	-	14	0
Japan	43218	41810	2470	280	329	20
De Forente Arabiske Emirater	-	80	249	-	0	1
Hong Kong	-	-	4	-	-	0
Singapore	395	812	653	2	5	5
Taiwan	9258	4575	3383	54	39	29
Trinidad og Tobago	-	5	-	-	0	-
U S A	6914	25379	7883	43	190	61
Total	63957	91016	20512	401	685	151

* tom.juni 2005