

Maryland Crab Cake Dinner

A Complete Menu: Crab Cakes, Tartar Sauce & Lemon-Herb Potatoes

Total time: approximately 1 hour | Serves 4

Classic Maryland crab cakes — golden, crispy, and packed with lump crab.

This is a complete Maryland-style crab cake dinner — the crab cakes themselves, a from-scratch tartar sauce with real capers and dill, and a bright lemon-herb roasted potato side that balances the richness beautifully. The whole meal is designed to come together in about an hour, with the tartar sauce and crab cake mixture chilling at the same time, and the potatoes roasting while you shape and bake the cakes. Read through the timing guide at the end before you start, and everything will land on the table together.

Maryland-Style Crab Cakes

Yield: 6–8 crab cakes

Prep: 15 min

Chill: 30 min

Cook: 12–15 min

Ingredients

- 1 lb lump crab meat (picked over for shells)
- 1 large egg, beaten
- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 1½ teaspoons Old Bay seasoning
- ⅓ cup crushed saltine crackers (about 8 crackers)
- Pinch of salt
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted (for topping)

Instructions

1. In a large bowl, whisk together the egg, mayonnaise, Dijon mustard, Worcestershire sauce, lemon juice, parsley, Old Bay, and salt.
2. Add the crushed saltines and stir to combine.
3. Gently fold in the lump crab meat, being careful not to break up the lumps. The mixture will be loose — that's correct. Minimal filler is the Maryland way.
4. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. This firms the mixture so the cakes hold their shape.
5. Preheat oven to 450°F (230°C). Lightly grease a baking sheet or line with a silicone mat (avoid parchment at this temperature).
6. Shape the mixture into 6–8 cakes, about ¾ inch thick. Place on the prepared baking sheet.
7. Brush the tops with melted butter.
8. Bake for 12–15 minutes until golden brown on top and cooked through.

Why It Works

The ratio of crab to filler is deliberately high — just enough egg, mayo, and cracker crumbs to bind without masking the sweet crab flavor. Old Bay, Worcestershire, and Dijon build savory depth in the background. Baking at high heat gives a golden crust without the mess of pan-frying.

Classic Tartar Sauce

Yield: About $\frac{3}{4}$ cup

Prep: 5 min

Rest: 30 min (recommended)

Ingredients

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons dill pickles, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon capers, roughly chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon fresh dill, finely chopped (or $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried)
- 1 teaspoon fresh parsley, finely chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- Pinch of salt and black pepper

Instructions

9. In a small bowl, combine the mayonnaise, pickles, capers, lemon juice, Dijon mustard, dill, parsley, and Worcestershire sauce.
10. Stir well, then season with salt and pepper to taste.
11. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving — this lets the flavors meld and mellow.
12. Give it a final stir and taste for seasoning before serving alongside the crab cakes.

Why It Works

Homemade tartar sauce is brighter and more textured than store-bought. The capers and pickles deliver brine and crunch, the lemon juice lifts everything, and the Dijon ties it all to the mustard note in the crab cakes. Resting time is key — 30 minutes transforms it from a mix of ingredients into a cohesive sauce.

Lemon-Herb Roasted Potatoes

Yield: 4 servings

Prep: 10 min

Cook: 25–30 min

Crispy, golden potatoes with lemon zest and fresh herbs — the perfect bright side.

Ingredients

- 2 lbs baby potatoes (or small Yukon Golds), halved
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 3 cloves garlic, minced (or 2 teaspoons garlic powder)
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary (or 1 tablespoon fresh, chopped)
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme (or 1 tablespoon fresh)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cracked black pepper
- Fresh parsley, chopped (for garnish)

Instructions

13. Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C).
14. In a large bowl, toss the halved potatoes with olive oil, lemon juice, lemon zest, garlic, rosemary, thyme, salt, and pepper until evenly coated.
15. Spread in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet, cut side down for maximum browning.
16. Roast for 25–30 minutes, flipping once halfway through, until golden and fork-tender.
17. Remove from oven, toss with fresh parsley, and squeeze a bit more lemon over the top if desired.

Why It Works

The acid from the lemon juice brightens the earthy potatoes and cuts through the richness of the crab cakes and tartar sauce. Roasting cut-side down at high heat maximizes the crispy surface area. The herb and garlic combination complements the Old Bay profile without competing with it.

Bring It All Together — Timing Guide

1. **Make the tartar sauce first** — it needs 30 minutes to rest in the fridge.
2. **Mix and chill the crab cakes** — they need 30 minutes in the fridge too (overlap with tartar sauce rest).
3. **While crab cakes chill, prep and start roasting the potatoes** — they'll take 25–30 minutes.
4. **Bake the crab cakes during the last 15 minutes of potato roasting** — both finish around the same time.
5. **Plate and serve** — crab cakes on the plate, potatoes alongside, tartar sauce and lemon wedges on the side.