

Carolina Mud Bugs (Freshwater Crayfish)

NORTH CAROLINA FISHERIES

Crayfish are eaten worldwide. Like other edible crustaceans, only a small portion of the crayfish is edible.

In most prepared dishes, such as soups, bisques and étouffées, only the tail portion is served. At crayfish boils or other meals where the entire body of the crayfish is presented, other portions may be eaten.



Claws of larger boiled specimens are often pulled apart to access the meat inside. Another favorite is to suck the head of the crayfish, as seasoning and flavor can collect in the fat of the boiled interior.

A common myth is that a crayfish with a straight tail died before it was boiled and is not safe to eat. In reality, crayfish that died before boiling can have curled tails as well as straight, as can those that were alive, and may very well be fine to eat.

Boiled crayfish which died before boiling are safe to eat if they were kept chilled before boiling and were not dead for a long time. A good way to determine safety in crayfish meat is whether it is mushy, usually an indication that it should be avoided.

Over 90% of the domestic crayfish production occurs in southern Louisiana and the Florida panhandle. In 2009, [North Carolina](#) had four active crayfish growers with 30 acres in production. Total harvest (tail meat) was 10,200 pounds with a farm gate value of \$35,700 or \$3.50 per pound.

Contributed by David Green