

How To Cook Live Lobster

Live Lobster Handling and Care

Lobsters have been known to last up to 24 hours out of sea water, but we cannot guarantee this, so it's best to cook immediately for best results. If not cooking right away, refrigerate your lobsters immediately, and keep them cold until you're ready to cook them (best around 40 degrees F). Put them in a dampened paper bag or cover with damp newspaper and place a container underneath to catch any drainage. Do not keep them in a sealed plastic bag, or put them in a sink, tub or bucket full of water. Lobsters live in sea water so anything out of a faucet will kill them quickly. Always pick them up by the body, not the claws or the tail.

Cooking Live Lobsters

Lobster boiled or steamed in sea water maintains its characteristic ocean taste. But not every cook has access to a few gallons of the Atlantic Ocean, so boiling or steaming in well-salted water is the next best option. Boiling and steaming are the methods of choice when you want to serve diners a whole lobster. Boiling is a little quicker and easier to time precisely, and the meat comes out of the shell more readily than when steamed. For recipes that call for fully cooked and picked lobster meat, boiling is the best approach. Choose a pot large enough to hold all the lobsters comfortably; do not crowd them. A 4 to 5-gallon pot can handle 6 to 8 pounds of lobster.

Boil

Fill pot with water, allowing 3 quarts of water per 1-1/2 to 2 pounds of lobster. Add 1/4 cup of sea salt for each gallon of water. Bring the water to a rolling boil. Add the live lobsters one at a time and start timing right away. Cover. Stir the lobsters halfway through cooking. Let the lobsters rest for 5 minutes or so after cooking to allow the meat to absorb some of the moisture in the shell.

Steam

Put 2 inches of seawater or salted water in the bottom of a large kettle. Set steaming rack inside the pot and bring to a rolling boil over high heat. Add the live lobsters one at a time, cover pot, and start timing.

Cook Times for Boiling and Steaming

- 1 pound - 8 minutes
- 1 1/4 pounds - 9-10 minutes
- 1 1/2 pounds 11-12 minutes
- 1 3/4 pounds 12-13 minutes
- 2 pounds 15 minutes
- +5 min for each additional 1/2 lb

