



Maryland Blue Crabs

Make Maryland Crab Dip Pretzels and learn about harvesting blue crabs in the Chesapeake Bay.



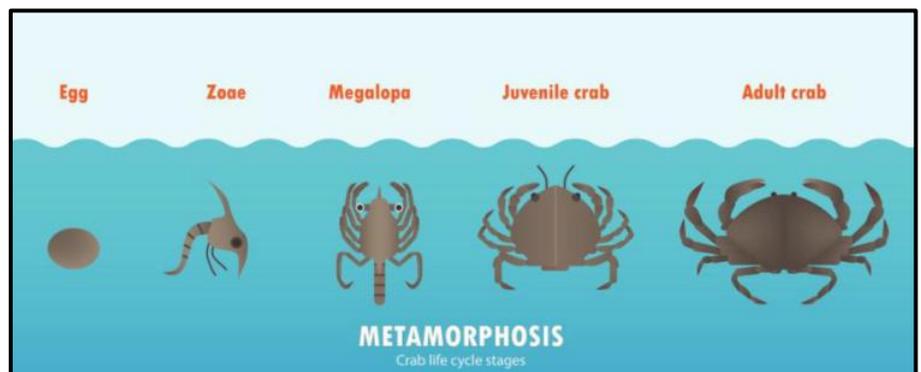
The Chesapeake Bay is an **estuary**, or body of water where salt water and fresh water mix. The Chesapeake Bay is about 200 miles long and stretches from Havre de Grace, Maryland to Virginia Beach, Virginia. The Bay is home to more than 173 varieties of shellfish. The blue crab is one of the most recognized shellfish living in the Bay. The blue crab is native to the Chesapeake Bay and lives in many parts of the Bay during its lifetime.



- During warm weather, Blue Crabs prefer shallow water, but in winter they dig down into the sand and mud in the deepest parts of the Bay.
- In May through October, both males and females prefer the **brackish water** (mix of salt and fresh water) of the middle Bay.
- After mating, females head south to the saltier waters of the lower Bay while males head toward fresh water.
- The females carry external egg masses to the saltier water, where larvae called **zoea** are released from the eggs. The zoea live and grow in the salty water of the lower Bay and Atlantic Ocean.
- The zoea **metamorphose** (change) into **megalopa** which crawl along the bottom of the Bay to reach the fresh water of the upper Bay and its rivers. Megalopa metamorphose into **juvenile crabs**. Crabs become **adults** 12 – 18 months after hatching.

To visit the interactive website *Bait to Plate: An Inside Look at Maryland's Crab Industry* click [here](#).

<https://tinyurl.com/8mwej4nh>



Graphic credit: *Bait to Plate: An Inside Look at Maryland's Crab Industry*

Many people enjoy eating blue crabs. Fish, birds, and sea turtles like to eat them too! Catching crabs for profit is known as **commercial crabbing**. Between April and November each year, more than 60 million pounds of blue crabs are harvested from the Chesapeake Bay and sold for millions of dollars. One third of the nation's blue crab harvest comes from the Bay.

To watch a video showing how Maryland Blue Crabs are harvested, picked, and processed click [here](#).

<https://tinyurl.com/3yrchr3v>



www.maefonline.com



When people catch crabs for sport, pleasure, or personal use, it is known as **recreational crabbing**. Recreational crabbers harvest more than 3 million pounds of blue crabs from the Bay each year.



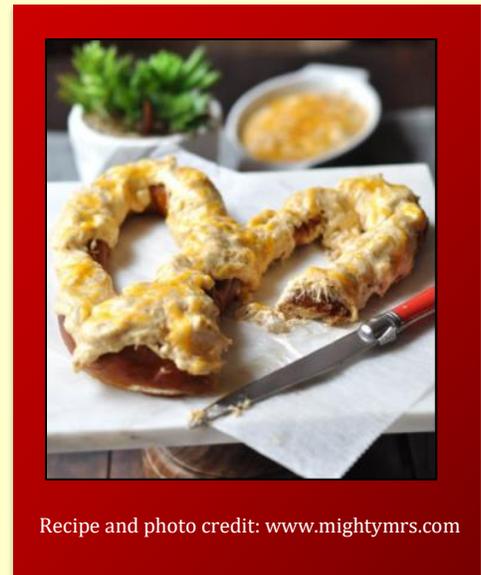
To read about crabbing with kids in the Chesapeake Bay click [here](#).

<https://tinyurl.com/yf846m3e>

Maryland Crab Dip Pretzels

Ingredients:

- 8 ounces cream cheese
- ½ cup sour cream
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 and ¼ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ teaspoon dry mustard
- pinch garlic salt
- 1 tablespoon milk
- ¼ cup cheddar cheese
- Old Bay seasoning to taste
- 8 ounces lump crab meat
- 2 jumbo fresh soft pretzels (often found in bread isle)



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Directions:

1. Put pretzels on baking sheet.
2. In large bowl, mix cream cheese, sour cream, mayonnaise, lemon juice, Worcestershire sauce, mustard powder, and garlic salt until smooth.
3. Add milk, cheddar cheese, and Old Bay seasoning to bowl and mix well.
4. Fold in crab meat and then spoon dip onto pretzels.
5. Sprinkle with a little bit of cheddar cheese if desired.
6. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 – 20 minutes or until crab dip is hot all the way through.



Note:

To make a bowl of crab dip without the pretzels, spoon the dip into a greased casserole dish at bake at 350 degrees for about 25 minutes. Serve with bread, chips, or hard pretzels.