

## Singaporean crab dishes

Written by REGINA BENGCO  
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Live giant crabs, each of them weighing at least 1.25 kilograms, crowd the bottom of aerated tanks in front of restaurants that line the Singapore River.

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They come from all over the world — from Alaska to Canada, Australia, and Sri Lanka — but all are destined for the kitchen, where they are turned into the juicy and spicy crab dishes that Singapore is famous for.

The Singapore chili crab comes to you on a big plate chopped, swimming, and glistening in a thick, reddish sauce which might initially shock taste buds unaccustomed to strong spices but the feeling will subside immediately into a mild sweetish tingle on your lips.

It is best eaten by four persons — not only because you would want to divide the bill — but because it is not possible to consume it alone without endangering one's health.

The fat in the crab shell, made even tastier by the rich chili sauce, is enough to satisfy one person, but one must also taste the succulent meat.

There is so much sauce that — unless you've ordered extra rice or buns to scoop it up — the remainder could be wrapped to go so you could make chili crab rice the following morning.

The black pepper crab has none of the sauce that would drip down your fingers as you try to crack the claw.

Anyone who has accidentally bitten into a peppercorn and remembered the stinging sensation would probably hesitate to eat crab that is coated with bits of black pepper.

However, it seems that somehow during the cooking process the flavor and kick of the black pepper left the cracked peppercorns and seeped through the deepest crevices of the crab.

The white pepper crab is drier than the black pepper crab but should not be underestimated.

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It deceives you into thinking that you are feasting on simple flavorsome crab meat, only to have you reaching for a cold drink in the next few minutes, as your brain declares, "Fire! Fire!"

There are other crab dishes, like crab with cream and with misua, but whether it's eaten in a fancy restaurant or a stall in the hawker centre, traveling foodies in Singapore should bear in mind that they are not only sharing a big crab — and it's spicy sauce — but an experience.