

GRAND TOUR

Traveling Gourmet

EAT AT JOE'S

By Diana von Welanetz Wentworth

JAMES BOND SIPPED CHAMPAGNE AND "PROCEEDED TO EAT, OR RATHER DEVOUR, THE MOST DELICIOUS MEAL HE HAD HAD IN HIS LIFE. THE MEAT OF THE STONE CRABS WAS THE TENDEREST, SWEETEST SHELLFISH HE HAD EVER TASTED."

—IAN FLEMING, *GOLDFINGER*

I WAS ONLY A TODDLER WHEN I LEARNED YOU could eat a shellfish and the creature would survive!

Along with Philippe's French Dip sandwiches in downtown Los Angeles, the Original Pancake House in Portland, Oregon, and Anderson's Split Pea Soup in Buellton, California, Joe's Stone Crab Restaurant in South Miami Beach was one of those iconic food destinations my parents scouted out then raved endlessly about. Their passion for tantalizing tastes had a tremendous influence and led to my career as a cookbook author and television food show host.

Joe's first opened in its current location in 1918, three years before anyone knew that the local stone crabs, so plentiful in the bay, were even edible. They served breakfast, lunch and dinner and it was a popular hangout for the earliest visitors to Miami including stars and film crews from Hollywood studios. Then in 1921 a marine researcher from Harvard took some of the crabs to Joe, they experimented and discovered how succulent the meat became when steamed and instantly chilled. A food craze was born! And, an eco-friendly one at that, as only the claws are harvested. The bodies are thrown back in the water where they can both reproduce and grow new claws at the same time.

Larry King described in his book, *Tell It to the King*, "A particularly memorable night at Joe's Stone Crab in Miami Beach was the night of the first Liston-Clay fight, in 1964. I will never again see a crowd like that in a restaurant, from Frank Sinatra to J. Edgar Hoover to Howard Cosell. . . . That was the fight in which Liston was a fifteen-to-one favorite and after which Clay said he was now going to be called Muhammad Ali."

The bustling ambiance has been upgraded since my first visit in the '60s when newspapers covered the tables. Now the place is posh and the service impeccable. Joe's serves some 2000 pounds of stone crabs per day in season—15,000 pounds per week. It is one of the half-dozen highest-grossing independent restaurants in the country, and that's based on a seven-month season, as compared with a twelve month season at the others.

Our recent lunch bill, including the \$18.95 cookbook and no alcohol, was \$201.00. The tab, of course, included a taste of all the sides—amazing coleslaw seasoned with apple cider vinegar and sweet pickles, creamed garlic spinach, large ovals of crusty hash browns, grilled tomatoes stuffed with spinach and crusted with cheese, and their award-winning key lime pie. The recipes for all but the coleslaw are in the book.

Our best advice is to avoid a two hour line by arriving 30 to

40 minutes before the restaurant opens, putting your name in at the desk, then enjoying a glass of wine or a key lime fizz in the comfortable bar or patio. Or browse next door at Joe's Take Away where you'll find a fantastic array of food, plus a breakfast menu, grilled sandwiches, key lime pies and yummy pastries.

For those not visiting Miami, or if you just wish to create the experience at home, the ultimate convenience is to simply order a complete dinner online at www.joesstonecrab.com, or phone 800-780-CRAB. It will arrive the next day.


JOE'S MUSTARD SAUCE

This is a great dipping sauce for all kinds of cooked shellfish. It tastes best if allowed to mellow for an hour or two in the refrigerator before serving.

- 1 tablespoon plus 1/2 teaspoon Colman's dry mustard, or more to taste
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon A-1 Sauce
- 2 tablespoons each heavy cream (whipping cream) and milk
- Pinch of salt

Stir together the dry mustard and 1 tablespoon water in a small mixing bowl; whisk in mayonnaise for one minute.

Add the remaining ingredients and whisk until the mixture is well-blended and creamy. [If you'd like more bite to your sauce, add a little more mustard, stirred with a little water to remove any lumps.] Makes 4 servings.

Other recipes are available on their website at www.joesstonecrab.com. They include crab cakes, mustard vinaigrette, and key lime pie. The cookbook contains all the recipes except the coleslaw which is considered a proprietary secret. 

*Diana von Welanetz Wentworth has enjoyed a career as an author of nine award-winning books and as a popular keynote speaker and television host. Her books include *Chicken Soup for the Soul Cookbook*, *The Pleasure of Your Company* (winner of the French Tastemaker "Cookbook of the Year" award), and her romantic memoir *Send Me Someone*. Please visit her website at www.DianaWentworth.com.*

