

DUNGENESS CRAB WITH LINGUINE

by Christopher Lee

Dungeness crab season is here, to the delight of many of us. I love crab at the holidays, when the crabs are small and delicately flavored. I recall my first Thanksgiving dinner in our tiny Berkeley cottage, just after the season opened in a now-distant November. We ate freshly steamed, messy Dungeness crabs and a simple (very French), butter lettuce salad garnished with chives. The temperature was in the 70s that day. I'd recently come from Chicago and its often chilly, often snowy autumns, and I was disoriented to be enjoying such delicious food in the wonderfully warm, sunny weather. The crab was a revelation: sweet and sharp at once, brightened further by a little lemon, the piles of shells that littered the table New Orleans-style growing. We drank a bottle of tasty, minerally Sancerre—a wonderful match for the crab—then we drank more of it. The wonderful, young Sancerre from Neveu is perfect for this dish.

2 fresh Dungeness crabs, 2½–3 pounds each,
or 2 pounds fresh Dungeness crab meat
4 ounces good Ligurian or Sicilian olive oil
2 ounces shallots, diced
½ cup fennel bulb, diced
1 or 2 dry-farmed tomatoes (1 cup),
peeled, seeded, and roughly chopped
1 small clove garlic, chopped
2 teaspoons chili flakes
1 lemon
Pinch of sea salt
400 grams fresh linguine
2 ounces Italian parsley, finely chopped

If crabs are fresh, drop into boiling water for 14 minutes. Remove from water, cool until you can handle them, crack, and clean. Discard shells. Sauté shallots and fennel in 2 tablespoons olive oil until soft but not browned. Add tomatoes, garlic, and chili flakes and sauté 1 minute. Grate lemon zest and add to sauce; squeeze all lemon juice into sauce. Add salt to taste. Add crab and remaining olive oil to sauce. Cook linguine in salted boiling water to al dente, toss with sauce, and serve in warm bowls. Sprinkle with chopped parsley.

Serves 4