



Enjoy a truly Western

Australian delicacy

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From casual shacks to fine dining, WA lobsters are finding themselves on menus across the state.

Fresh lobster for every occasion

Summer is on the doorstep, and already Western Australians can feel the anticipation building for all the warmer months have to offer across our great state.

For many of us, this time of year means hours spent along the coast with family and friends, soaking up the sun, exploring our beaches and island destinations, and indulging in some Indian Ocean fare.

Enter the king of Western Australian seafood – the western rock lobster. A centrepiece on Christmas platters across the state each year, the crustacean is known for its rich flavour and the striking ways in which it can be presented. It's also incredibly versatile though, and doesn't have to be saved for a special occasion – why not enjoy a lobster roll for Sunday lunch?

Local lobster can be sourced by purchasing directly through back-of-boat sales, from your local fishmonger or seafood retailer or you can also buy wholesale direct from a western rock lobster processor.

If you're more in the mood to indulge in someone else's cooking, many of Perth's fine dining restaurants serve lobster in all its glory, while the famous Lobster Shack plates up the

delicacy in a more casual setting. For many though, fresh, live lobster bought directly from the docks thanks to the introduction of back-of-boat sales is a temptation hard to resist.

Many local commercial rock lobster fishers use the mechanism to sell freshly caught lobsters to members of the public straight from their vessels, enabling West Aussies of all backgrounds to enjoy this truly Western Australian product as if they'd caught it themselves – talk about ocean to plate.

In addition to snagging some high-quality seafood, back-of-boat buyers also go home with a deeper connection to their food and community, and the knowledge they have directly supported local business.

To find times and locations for back-of-boat sales, follow the @BackofBoatLobsters Facebook page. Of course, there are guidelines for how to safely and humanely handle and prepare live lobsters, but don't worry, it's easy, and you can find all you need to know in this special feature.

Whether you plan to boil, barbecue or steam your lobsters, mix them into a salad or enjoy in a roll alongside some chips, one thing's for sure – it'll be a tasty treat for the whole family.



Back of Boat sales at Fremantle Harbour.

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Western rock lobsters ready for sale at the Freo Farmers Market.

Line of cut

View of a lobster from above, showing the line of cut for lobster splitting.

Ganglia

You can store live lobsters for up to 24 hours in your refrigerator. Keep them upright, moist and cold and you're good to go.

Cross-section view of a lobster, showing the internal nerve centres.

Buying, storing and preparing live lobster

A key part of storing lobsters is keeping them moist and cool so they remain fresh and alive.

If you plan to buy direct from the back-of-boat, it is best to take a cooled esky with you to transport your produce. Wrap the lobsters in a damp cloth or newspaper with ice, but take care that they are not immersed in melted ice. Less transport time is preferable.

Handling and storing

You can keep your lobsters alive for up to 24 hours by keeping them upright and covered in the damp cloth or newspaper in your refrigerator.

Do not store live lobsters in fresh or salt water, your freezer or sealed plastic bags, as they need to breathe.

Rendering your lobster unconscious

Prior to dispatching your lobster, it is important that they are properly insensible, or rendered unconscious.

How do you know if your lobster is unconscious?

- No resistance to handling.
- No eye reactions when shell is tapped.
- No control of limb movement.
- No reaction when touched around the mouthparts.

There are two main methods recommended by the RSPCA for achieving this.

1. Chill them in a water slurry at an ice to water ratio of 3:1, kept at around -1C for at least 20 minutes or until showing signs of being unconscious.
2. Place the lobster in your freezer or chiller section (less than 4C) for at least 20 minutes or until there is no sign of movement.

Larger lobsters may need to be chilled for longer using either method.

Humane dispatch

Once the lobster is unconscious and showing no signs of movement, they should be mechanically dispatched immediately.

This is most easily achieved by splitting the lobster along the mid-line from head to tail with a large blade, or inserting a blade deeply between the horns then turning the lobster over and cutting to an inch deep from between the rear legs along to the mouth parts.

Cooked to perfection no matter the method

One of the best things about lobster is it is versatile – you can cook and prepare it in a multitude of ways. The most popular methods, however, are boiling, steaming and barbecuing. The method you choose should depend on what flavour and texture you are seeking.

When boiling, you may choose to use fresh water with a tablespoon of salt per litre, or you could use natural seawater for an authentic touch. Completely submerge your lobster in boiling water and cover, cooking until the meat turns from opaque to white and the shell turns bright red.

For a steamed dish, add two inches of salted water to a large pot and fit with a steam rack. Add lobsters one at a time, without overcrowding the pot, and cook according to the time chart (see the bottom right of this page).

If using the barbecue, split the lobster lengthways, de-vein and remove contents of the head under running water without wetting the tail. Marinate to taste and place shell-side down on the barbecue for around five minutes. When the meat closer to the tail end has turned white but the centre is still slightly opaque, turn the lobster over for a minute or two.

THE BENEFITS:

Boiled: Meat will cook quicker and will slip out of the shell more easily than steaming.

Steamed: It is harder to overcook using this method, meaning the meat is generally more tender.

Barbecued: Enables the infusion of a smoky flavour from the coals and any marinades or butters.



Rob Broadfield's classic Maine-style rolls (serves 4)

- INGREDIENTS**
- Cooked lobster meat, roughly chopped
 - 1 celery stalk, finely chopped
 - 1 green onion stalk, finely chopped
 - 1 tbsp Japanese mayonnaise
 - 1 tsp lime juice
 - Pepper or Tabasco sauce to taste
 - Fresh dill or chives to garnish
 - Potato chips
- DIRECTIONS**
1. Fill a large steamer pot with about 6cm of water. Add fistfuls of salt and half a lemon and bring to boil over a medium heat. Drop two lobsters in a steamer basket or directly into the pot.
 2. Cover and steam – or boil – for eight to 10 minutes depending on the size. You'll know they're ready when the shells turn bright red. Remove and place them in an ice bath to halt the cooking process.
 3. Remove the meat from the tail, being careful to de-vein as well. Kitchen scissors are recommended as a knife can be too fiddly.
 4. Roughly chop the meat into 1-2cm chunks and set aside.
 5. Cut the cheeks off four hot dog buns and lightly fry each side in a butter-greased pan.
 6. Mix the mayonnaise, celery, spring onion and lime juice in a bowl. Add the pepper or Tabasco to your liking. Add the lobster meat and gently toss until meat is evenly coated.
 7. Spread evenly through the toasted buns and garnish with fresh dill or chives and serve with potato chips.

"When you boil your lobster in the pot, you've got to ensure it's as salty as the sea. Put fistfuls of salt into the water."



Ronny Dahl's barbecue rock lobster (serves 2)

- INGREDIENTS**
- 2 western rock lobsters
 - 80g butter, melted
 - 1 garlic clove
 - 1 medium chilli, diced
 - Zest and juice of half a lemon
 - Salt and pepper
 - Handful chopped parsley
- DIRECTIONS**
1. Split two lobsters in half down the tail to give four portions. Discard the head meat and rinse in salt water. If you're at home and using fresh tap water, keep the tail raised to ensure the lobster's natural flavour isn't washed away.
 2. Prepare the marinade by melting 80 grams of butter in a small pan. Add garlic, chilli, parsley and lemon zest. Stir the marinade on a low heat and squeeze in lemon juice. Salt and pepper to taste.
 3. Brush the half lobster tails with the marinade and place shell side down on a medium-high heat griddle pan or hot plate and grill for four to five minutes.
 4. Flip so the flesh is facing down, brush the shell with the marinade and grill for another two to three minutes to seal in the flavour and brown the flesh. Once cooked, remove from heat and brush the lobster flesh again with the marinade.
 5. Serve with a tomato salad and a fresh knob of bread.



Liam Atkinson's lobster with seaweed butter and spring vegetables (serves 2-4)

- INGREDIENTS**
- 1 western rock lobster
 - 150g unsalted butter
 - 50g pickled seaweed, shredded
 - Zest and juice of half a lemon
 - 3 asparagus spears, cut into 2cm lengths
 - ½ cup broad beans, podded
 - 2 pickled artichokes, cut into quarters
 - Dijon mustard vinaigrette
 - Salt and pepper
- DIRECTIONS**
1. Using a large, sharp knife, split the lobster in half down the centre and remove the vein, keeping the head meat aside for later. Keep the lobster halves in the fridge.
 2. Blanch the asparagus and broad beans in boiling salted water for one minute before plunging them into ice water until cold. Drain well, and place in a bowl with the artichoke.
 3. In another bowl, mix the butter and head meat of the lobster until smooth, then fold through the shredded pickled seaweed.
 4. Have a steamer oven ready at 100C or bring a pot of water with a steamer basket to the boil.
 5. Place the lobster on a plate flesh side up so the shell catches all the flavour. Season with salt and pepper, then spoon over the seaweed butter. Steam the lobster flesh side up for seven minutes.
 6. Once cooked, gently place the lobster on a clean plate and dress with the residual runoff butter and a squeeze of lemon.
 7. Dress the asparagus, broad beans and artichoke with the vinaigrette and gently place them on top of the lobster. Finish the dish with a zest of lemon.

LOBSTER COOKING CHART		
Weight	Boil	Steam
400g	8-10 minutes	10-12 minutes
500g	10-12 minutes	12-14 minutes
Over 600g	12-15+ minutes	14-17 minutes