

DIVERSITY

Cornish shellfish comes in three main species: brown, or edible, crabs, lobster and spider crabs.

Not many people know about spider crabs, also known as the Cornish King Crab, with its eight spidery legs and two long pincer claws. Almost unique to Cornwall, this reddish-brown beast is the Cornish answer to the Deadliest Catch! They have a lovely sweet taste, worth the effort involved to find the best bits tucked away in the legs.

[Spider crabs were once so numerous that at very low tides the harbour floor in Newlyn would turn reddish-brown, so dense were the piles of spider crabs resting there.]* Cornwall's hidden fishy secret, more than 300,000kg of spider crabs were caught in 2007 but at least 95% were exported to France and Spain.

Brown crabs are the most popular shellfish caught off the Cornish coast. A reddish-brown colour when alive, turning a bright red-orange when cooked.

All over Cornwall pubs, hotels and cafes sell proper crab sandwiches, made with fresh brown bread and lovely sweet crab meat. Apart from sandwiches there are lots of lovely recipes for this underrated shellfish from soup to salad or pasta.

Affordable and easy to find, you can buy them live, cooked, whole, dressed or pasteurised. Some fans prefer the brown meat, others the white, or just mix together and sprinkle with lemon juice. Delicious.

A seafood restaurant in Cornwall is not a proper seafood restaurant if Cornish lobster is not on the menu. Chefs all over Britain also love this hunky beast, which is a greenish blue when alive and turns a vivid red when cooked.

Away from restaurants Cornish lobsters are often displaced by cheaper imports from Canada and America. These imposters have travelled thousands of miles to get to a supermarket shelf, and are no match for the quality and taste of Cornish caught lobsters. Ask for Cornish lobsters and look out for the bands round their claws.