

# A Sutherland Belle

## Chesapeake Crab and Mushroom Bisque

My husband grew up on the Chesapeake Bay, where crab season isn't just about food — it's about ritual. Every summer we wait for the bushels to come in, ready to spend long afternoons at the table, breaking shells with our hands, butter dripping down our chins, a cold beer sweating in reach. That is the true Southern way of eating: slow, messy, joyful, and together.

When fall comes, though, crabs move from the picking table to the soup pot. A bisque warms the season, turning those same sweet crabmeat flavors into comfort you can hold in a spoon. I first tasted a version of this dish at a little restaurant on the Rappahannock River, and I knew immediately I'd be recreating it at home. This recipe is simple, quick, and deeply satisfying — proof that sometimes the best flavors are the ones tied to both place and memory.

### INGREDIENTS

- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 1 medium onion, finely diced
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1–2 tablespoons Old Bay seasoning (*to taste*)
- 1 teaspoon celery seeds
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 quart (4 cups) half-and-half
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard (*or ground mustard*)
- 1 pound jumbo lump crabmeat, picked over for shells (*reserve ¼ cup for garnish*)
- 16 ounces shiitake or cremini mushrooms, stems removed, thinly sliced
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 cup seafood stock (*for a thicker bisque, substitute additional cream*)
- 3 tablespoons dry sherry
- Kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper, to taste
- Fresh parsley, hot sauce, and oyster crackers, for serving

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large pot, melt 4 tablespoons of the butter over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, until softened, about 5 minutes.
2. Stir in the flour and cook 1–2 minutes, whisking until absorbed by the butter. Add the Old Bay, celery seeds, and garlic powder; whisk to combine.
3. Slowly whisk in the half-and-half. Bring to a gentle simmer, then reduce heat to low. Cook, stirring often, until the mixture thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon.
4. Add the mushrooms, then gently stir in the cream, seafood stock, and crabmeat. Cook 5–10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season with salt and pepper.

5. Just before serving, stir in the remaining 1 tablespoon butter and the sherry.
  6. Ladle into bowls and garnish with parsley, a dash of hot sauce, oyster crackers, and the reserved crabmeat. Serve immediately.
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### **Serving Suggestions**

This bisque pairs beautifully with a simple green salad, cornbread, or warm crusty bread to mop up the broth. A chilled glass of white wine or a crisp lager complements it perfectly.

### **Storage**

- Refrigerate leftovers in an airtight container for up to 3 days.
- Reheat gently on the stovetop over low heat to avoid curdling the cream (*do not boil*).
- Not recommended for freezing, as the dairy may separate.