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## Back at Victor's

May 8, 2010  
by James

Last Saturday I returned to [Victors Food](#) with a foodie friend of mine for Singapore Chilli Crab class.



Hold on to your lunch!

We walked in, and lunch could have walked out! On the table in front of us was a crate of Mud Crab's from Queensland, one for each of Victor and [Wanitha's](#) students for the next three hours.

The most intense part of the whole experience happens after an hour when the crabs come out of the freezer, where they have been asleep. Popping them in the freezer for an hour or so is the most humane way to prepare them, and keep them fresh and flavoursome. Once you have achieved crab coma state you become someone different and with your bare hands are shown how to remove the front claws and then with the aide of a knife and your thumb you remove the back shell in one full movement. The beautiful creature is still alive, even when you remove the back shell and this is clear for a minute or so afterwards. The name of the game is speed and precision and I am sure that once you have done two or three in your life the whole concept of killing something disappears and it really is about humane and skilled preparation. Still this is not for the faint-hearted.

Breaking down the crab into pieces to cook up in the chilli, ginger, shallots, garlic and tomato is pretty straightforward after that and the cooking even easier (just make sure you get rid of all the nasty bits, particularly the dead man's fingers). [Or if you can't be bothered learning how to take apart the crab and getting messy before you eat it then cheat and use soft shell.](#) But you're missing out on a fantastic experience!

Fry off the ginger, and the rest of the sauce ingredients and then throw in the crab for about 20 minutes. It helps if you crack the shell on the larger pieces so that they cook faster and the juices get into the meat. I would start off with the larger pieces and cook them off for 5 minutes longer than the rest. Throw in a few scallions just before serving.



There was no time to give any of them a name

Whilst the crab was awesome to handle, cook and taste the best learning outcome that I got from the experience was the how of stir-frys. You don't need oil! Instead of using oil in your wok make up a broth, or *breath* of chicken stock, rice wine and soy sauce and add your chopped garlic to this. Garlic doesn't do well in oil and contrary to most western recipes and ways of cooking does far better if added once there is some wetness in the dish.

Use dash of the broth to start of the stir-fry and then add small quantities throughout the cooking to keep your veggies, meat and noodles moving. Don't drown them, there should be an ever so slight steam and that is all. The result is restaurant quality stir-fry, the delicate flavour of each vegetable remains on the palate as you eat it and the whole dish is much lighter and fragrant than I have ever managed to achieve at oil. Time to treat myself to a new wok I think.



Fingers are the only way to eat Singapore Chilli Crab - and it's not first date food!

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