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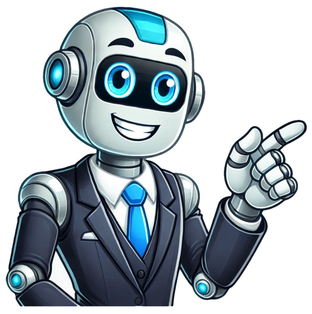

How to kill a lobster

Lobster is best when killed immediately before cooking. Unless you bought a frozen lobster, what you brought home from the market is alive and kicking and that leaves the task up to the cook. What is the most humane way to dispatch a lobster? While plunging the live lobster into a pot of boiling water will surely be fatal, there is some debate as to whether it is cruel. The lobster's thrashing tail often makes a knocking sound inside the pot, sometimes loosening the lid, and that can make the cook—or those nearby waiting for dinner—a bit uncomfortable. But does the lobster suffer? The jury is still out on this one but most chefs agree that dispatching a lobster before cooking is the best approach. There are a few ways to kill a lobster. By doing it before cooking, you have the option to boil, bake, steam, or cook it in another way. Freeze the lobster by placing it in the freezer for 30 to 60 minutes before putting it headfirst into a pot of boiling water.A quicker option is to plunge a knife straight down into the carapace (part of the exoskeleton on the lobster's back). Place the tip of a sharp chef's knife behind the lobster's eyes, right below where the claws meet the body, and halfway to the first joint. Swiftly plunge the knife down through the head. The legs will continue to move a bit afterward but the lobster is dead.Many chefs prefer a combination of the two: After freezing for 30 minutes, plunge the knife into the lobster. Some chefs prefer just 15 minutes, which is enough to sedate the lobster without freezing the meat.As an alternative to freezing, you can desensitize the lobster by placing it in a large pot in the sink. Begin filling it with cold tap water and gradually increase the water temperature until it is very hot. You can then use the knife to dispatch the lobster. If you don't want to go through those steps and plan to boil the lobster, there's another option. Freeze the lobster for 30 to 60 minutes, then put it in the pot of boiling water head-first. While the boiling water, rather than the freezer, will kill it almost instantly, the cold will immobilize the lobster so it won't thrash about. Research indicates lobsters have no central nervous system or cerebral cortex to register stimuli. It's more like an insect—lobstermen often refer to them as such. While this makes it likely that it cannot feel pain, there is still some debate. Some studies have shown reactions of some sort to a stimulus in lobsters and crabs that may be caused by pain, but it remains unclear. Whether it is believed the lobsters experience pain or not, killing the lobster just before cooking is the preferred method. Perhaps this is for the benefit of the cook as a way to minimize trauma since most people are disconnected from the killing of animals they eat. This approach is also promoted by chefs who discovered that the lobster's muscles toughen with the shock of hitting the boiling water, meaning the meat will not be as tender. In Switzerland and some parts of Italy, cooking live lobster is banned. The animals are often stunned with electricity or killed in some manner before cooking. Electric lobster stunning devices are available. At a cost of a few thousand dollars, however, they're unreasonable for most home cooks who enjoy the occasional lobster. Professional chefs who regularly work with lobsters are equally divided on the issue. Generally, they use one of the methods to dispatch the lobster before cooking. It's always done quickly and speed seems to be the consensus on the most humane way to approach the task. The least humane way is to dismember a lobster without killing it first—or at least stunning it with cold. In some restaurants, chefs would remove the tail and legs while the lobster was still alive then skewer it with a deadly blow. Microwaving is considered another inhumane option. Many people have heard that boiling crustaceans alive is a painful and inhumane way to kill a crab or lobster and this is backed up by many convincing studies as well as physical evidence such as animals dropping their limbs and writhing around before dying. Shellfish such as crab and lobster are among the most sustainable of our Cornish seafood so we felt it was important to give some clear advice to the public to ensure that people know how to humanely kill them. Working with experienced shell fisherman and marine biologist Phil Lockley, and taking advice from the RSPCA, we have created a quick guide which helps you make sure you kill your lobster or crab quickly and humanely. Before killing the animal should be stunned This can be achieved in two ways 1.By using electric shock – a specialised piece of equipment called a crustastun is available (but many people won’t have access to this). 2. By cooling the animal down to a temperature within its natural range (i.e. down to 2 or 3 degrees)– this can be done by wrapping the animal in a wet cloth or seaweed and then cooling it by putting it in a freezer or by packing crushed ice around it. Once the animal is in a sleep state (torpor) it can be humanely killed by physically severing the main nervous system and then draining the animal of blood. For a brown crab Cancer pagurus, this is achieved by spiking the animal on the underside of the crab and thus destroying the main nerve centre see diagram, the procedure takes only a few seconds. The Crab should be turned over and the fluid allwed to drain from the animal. By cutting the underside of the lobster along the centre line from the head to the tail the animal can be quickly and humanely killed. There is no need to cut right through the shell as the nerve centres of the animal are close to the underside. The crab or lobster should then be cooked as soon as possible Phil Lockley – pers comm This week, we've already discussed how to buy and store a lobster and tasted soft-shell lobsters blind against hard-shells (we unanimously preferred soft-shells). Now the real question: What's the best way to cook them? Boiling? Steaming? Roasting? And what about killing the sucker before you do it? Should they be boiled alive? Frozen to death? Bludgeoned with a rubber chicken? I find the easiest way to shuck large amounts of lobster is to do it assembly-line style. Crack all the shells first, then pick all the meat. Photographs: J. Kenji López-Alt. Video: Vicky Wasik and Natalie Holt Let's take a look at all of those questions (except the chicken one, silly). Let's get one thing straight: Lobsters aren't humans. They aren't even mammals, or fish. Their anatomy is much more similar to that of, say, a cockroach or a beetle, grown to gargantuan proportions because they live a life unfettered by gravity at the bottom of the ocean. That said, lobsters do have nerves, and a very real (if very primitive) nervous system that can react to outside stimuli. Current research is unclear on whether or not their brains have the capacity to process such stimuli as pain and undergo emotional trauma when it's administered (a feeling we'd refer to as "suffering"), but many people still like to minimize the chance that the creature is suffering before it's consumed. The fastest way to kill a lobster is the same way you'd dispatch zombies in a Walking Dead scenario: stab it in the head. Press the tip of a knife in the crack that you'll find set slightly behind the eyes on the head, and press down firmly and quickly, splitting the head completely in half. This will instantly sever the main nerve ganglia in the lobster's carapace—though it does nothing to the ganglia around the rest of its body, which is why you'll see its tail and claws continue to move for a long time after the lobster has been dispatched—as well as most of its vital organs. That a lobster will continue to crawl around and, well, act like a lobster even after its head has been removed is a good indication of the primitiveness of its nervous system. Like a cockroach's, its body can still move even without a central brain to control it. Boiling or steaming the bugs is also an option, and in reality, not much more cruel. The lobsters will continue to show some movement through reflexes for several moments, but their central brain functions will cease within the first few moments of hitting the water. There are a number of recommended ways of cooking lobster. Let's take a look at them and see if we can't figure out what's really the best. Very old recipes for lobster call for cooking times as long as 10 minutes per pound. Ten minutes! Per pound! How the heck did anyone ever eat those rubber balls? As we now know, when you're cooking meat, temperature is a much better indicator of doneness than time. For optimal tenderness and texture, lobster meat should come to around 135°F (57°C), or maybe 140°F (60°C) maximum, which ends up translating to just around four or five minutes of boiling for a one- to one-and-a-half-pound lobster. (Use an instant-read thermometer.) Any hotter, and you'll end up in rubber-band territory. How you get the lobster to that perfect final temperature is another matter entirely. But first, an interesting aside. Lobsters turn red when you cook them in much the same way that leaves change color in the autumn: The underlying color is there all along, waiting to be released. In the case of lobsters (and other crustaceans), the bright-red hue comes from a heat-stable carotenoid pigment called astaxanthin. It's this pigment that turns the flesh of salmon and the feathers of flamingos—animals that feed heavily on crustaceans—into the familiar pinkish-orange color. (Farmed salmon have pigments added to their diet to color their flesh—without them, they'd be totally white.) When astaxanthin is mixed with the many other pigments found in a lobster's shell, you get the familiar range of bluish-purple to green or dark-orange colors of a live lobster. Heat them up, and the other pigments break down, leaving just the carotenoids behind. Why do I know all of this? Because every year during our annual Christmas lobster course, my grandfather—who by this point has already got two Martinis, a couple of glasses of Chardonnay, and half a pour of vin jaune down the hole—insists on telling me. While this tidbit is certainly interesting, it doesn't exactly help me on my quest for perfectly cooked lobster meat. What does, however, is the other bit of wisdom he feels compelled to bestow from on high every Christmas: the best way to cook a lobster. Here's his problem with boiling: When you cook a lobster in a large pot of water, take it out, then look inside the pot, what do you see? That's right: cloudy, murky water with weird white gunk floating on top. Now stick your nose in there and inhale. What do you smell? Yup. Lobster. And here's one thing I can guarantee: What's in that pot is not in your lobster. The massive amount of water circulating in and out of the lobster's body can quite efficiently wash away many of the flavorful compounds you find inside the meat. Not only that, but for larger lobsters, the high heat of boiling can cause the exterior to overcook while the interior remains raw (one of the reasons why larger lobsters often seem so much tougher than smaller lobsters that cook faster). So plunging them into boiling water is not the way to go. At first glance, you'd think that steaming would be a gentler method of cooking than boiling. Surely very dense water at 212°F (100°C) should heat faster than steam, which is not very dense at all, at 212°F? The denser the medium, the more efficient it is at transferring heat, right? True, but this doesn't take into account the latent heat of vaporization of water. It takes about five times the amount of heat energy to convert water into steam as it does to raise either water or steam's temperature by 1°C. This energy is stored in the steam molecules, and as they hit the surface of the food being cooked and re-condense into water, the stored energy is released onto the surface of the food, heating it. While steaming does offer the advantage of not diluting flavor like boiling does, it does nothing to solve our fast-cooking problem. This finally brings us to… Now this seems promising, and it's the method my grandfather has always recommended. According to him, rather than diluting and washing away the flavorful compounds in the lobster's flesh, roasting will heat the lobster through, cooking it and simultaneously evaporating some of its excess moisture. The result should be meat that is more intensely flavored, not less. He's absolutely right. Roasting a lobster in the oven—I found that bringing it up to 135°F in a 350°F oven worked very well—gives you extraordinarily aromatic meat with a much more intense, sweeter flavor. Roasting is also a slower cooking process than steaming or boiling, leading to more evenly cooked meat But, just as every rose has its thorn and every cowboy sings a sad, sad song, this good method comes complete with a couple of problems of its own. The first you'll notice is that roasted lobster meat is much harder to remove from the shell than boiled. This is because as the proteins in the meat slowly heat up, they chemically bond with the interior of the shell. Rapid heating, on the other hand, causes them to shrink too fast for them to form these bonds. "Steam or boil the lobsters just until the very exterior of their meat sets—about one minute—remove them from the steamer, then finish them off in the oven." This leaves us in a rather sticky situation. Cook too fast by steaming, and some of the meat gets rubbery. Cook too slowly by roasting, and the meat sticks to the shell. Solution? Steam or boil the lobsters just until the very exterior of their meat sets—about one minute—remove them from the steamer, then finish them off in the oven. With easily shelled, evenly cooked, and intensely flavored meat, we're almost there. There's just one last hurdle to overcome. The trouble is with enzymes mostly located in the dark liver in the central carapace. These enzymes break down the protein structure of the lobster's muscles, becoming highly active after the lobster's death (the main reason you should always look for lively lobsters), particularly at warmer temperatures. Cook too slowly, and you give these enzymes too much time to work, delivering tail meat that borders on mushy near the carapace end. The only two ways I know of to prevent this from happening: Either cook it all the way through very rapidly (already out of the question), or completely remove the tail and claws from the carapace (and offending liver) before cooking. The latter seems the more sensible option, and you can always cook the liver separately if you're one of those who like to eat it. There are other distinct advantages to cooking tails and claws separately from the carapace. For one thing, it allows you to address the fact that the tail is much thicker than the claws or knuckles, and therefore needs a little more cooking time. It also allows you to keep your carapaces intact to use as desired (I make mine into stock to cook my paella in). Finally, it solves the pesky old curly-tail problem. You know, when your lobster tail curls up into a little ball like a pillbug (an isopod which it very closely resembles)? Straight tail on the left, curled on the right. I want the left. It doesn't make much difference in flavor, but sometimes it's nice to have straight tails for presentation purposes. Here's how you do it: That's right, just flatten it on a board. Don't be alarmed if the tail continues to curl and jerk suddenly, even after it's been completely removed from the lobster's body: This is a reflex reaction. I've seen it last up to two hours after the rest of the lobster is dead. Once you have it flat out on the board, spear it with a couple of stiff wooden skewers, starting from the body end and exiting through the joints near the tail end. Of course, insert the skewers as close as possible to the shell to minimize muscle damage. If ripping the claws and tail off of a lobster that you've just impaled through the head with a knife leaves you cold, you can always perform the par-steaming step first, then use kitchen towels to grasp and dismember the dead beasts before continuing with the roasting steps. (You won't be able to get a straight tail this way, BTW.) There's no easy way to break it to you: Peeling a lobster is messy, painstaking work. Whether it's hard or soft, the best way to peel a lobster is to start with the tail. First, squeeze it firmly from the sides, pushing the edges of the shell together underneath the tail until you hear a series of cracks. This should break or crease most of the cartilaginous material under the tail. Next, pull apart the edge of the shell. It should separate quite easily. (If not, use kitchen shears to carefully snip through the cartilage, then try pulling it apart again.) Once it's cracked open, the shell meat should easily pop out. Claws are a bit trickier. With a soft-shell (new-shell) lobster, you can usually get through them with kitchen shears. I start by breaking off the small claw (carefully, so as not to remove the meat inside with it!), then cutting the bottom of the claw open with a pair of kitchen shears. The goal is to cut just enough that you can extract the meat by jerking the claw downwards—think of the motion you'd use to get the last bit of shampoo out of the bottle. For very hard-shell lobsters, some more force is required. I start by wrapping them in a clean dish towel and whacking them sharply all over with the back of a heavy cleaver. The goal here is to crack them like eggshells, not smash them into smithereens. Once they're good and crackly, I break off the knuckles (protecting my hands with more clean dish towels—yes, I go through lots of them), then gently break off the small pincer. If I'm lucky or feeling extra talented, I manage to get the shell off the pincer without ripping the meat off the rest of the claw. More often, I have to fish out the little nugget with a skewer or a chopstick. Finally, fish the knuckle meat out with the help of kitchen shears and a chopstick or the dull end of a wooden skewer. What you should end up with is a nice big tail, solid pieces of claw meat, and four little knuckles. The legs I don't bother pre-shucking, but you can serve them on the side in their shells for people to pick the sweet meat out of directly with their teeth. Your lobster meat is now ready to go. Chop it up and dress it for some Wicked Good Lobster Rolls, toss it into a Thai-Style Lobster Salad, or just heat it up with some butter and serve it with lemon. Picked lobster meat can be stored in the refrigerator for up to two days. It's not necessary, but if you'd like to kill the lobster before cooking it, do so by driving a knife into the center of its head and pushing down to split it open. Grab the tail and the carapace firmly in your hands. Twist off the tail, being careful not to stick your fingers into the underside—the lobster tail can still contract quite forcefully through reflex reactions, even when completely separated from the body, pinching your fingers. Set the separated tail aside. Twist off the claws below the first knuckle. The goal is to keep as much edible meat as possible. Repeat with the second claw. All the pieces are now ready to cook. The head can be frozen and saved for stock if you'd like. Otherwise, take off the legs and discard the rest of the head. Start cooking by steaming the lobsters over boiling water. The goal is to steam just long enough to get the meat to set. This takes just about two minutes. Sometimes the lobsters' tails will still be twitching a tiny bit even after the initial two-minute steam. This is a reflex reaction. Don't worry about it. Transfer the lobsters to a 350°F (180°C) oven and roast until each piece hits 135°F (57°C). That's about seven minutes for the claws and 15 for the tails. Make sure to use your thermometer! This tail was slightly overcooked. Oops. To peel the tails, start by running them under cold water to cool them a bit. Crack the tails lengthwise by squeezing them hard. This will make it easier to split them open. Pull the tails open lengthwise. Pull the tail meat out in one large piece. Lobsters sometimes have gunk running down their tails ("gunk" being the technical term). You can wash this out by running cold water into the tract, or, if you're chopping the meat anyway, just wash it out after splitting the tails in half. Break off the small pincer. If you do it carefully, you can break it off and remove the shell without taking the meat with it. This is the goal. But it's okay if you don't meet it. Oops, I broke off the small bit of meat. That's fine. Once you've removed it, pull out the cartilage that extends into the main compartment of the claw and discard it. Sometimes meat gets stuck inside the little pincer, in which case you may have to fish it out with a chopstick or skewer. Place the large part of the claw on a clean(-ish) dish towel. Fold the towel over and rap the claw hard with the back of a knife to crack it. If you have an exceptionally soft lobster, you can cut through the shell with just a pair of kitchen shears. If you did it right, you'll have cracked through the shell while leaving the meat intact. If you did it wrong, however, you'll end up accidentally cutting the claw meat in half. This is not the end of the world. Pull out the meat from inside the shell. The knuckles have plenty of good meat in them, too, see? It's the sweetest, most tender part of the lobster, and my favorite bite. Twist off the knuckles using a dish towel or sturdy rubber gloves. Each claw will have two knuckles attached to it. Separate them from each other. Push the meat out of the knuckle with the back of a chopstick. Your lobster, perfectly cooked and ready to eat! 1 Numb the lobster by freezing it for 20 minutes. Place the lobster on a tray and place it in the freezer on a shelf or another flat area. This will slightly numb the lobster, making its death less painful. Freezing also slows the lobster’s movements down so that it’s easier to work with.[1] 2 Put the lobster on a cutting board and a baking sheet. You’ll be using a large knife to kill the lobster, so pick up the lobster by its back and set the lobster on a sturdy cutting board. Also place a baking sheet underneath the cutting board so that any liquids that come out of the lobster don’t cause a mess.[2] Although the lobster’s movements will likely be minimal, it can still potentially hurt you with its claws. Keep rubber bands wrapped around the lobster’s claws while you handle it to ensure your safety. 3 Place the tip of a large chef’s knife right behind the lobster’s eyes. Get a large, sharp chef’s knife that’s 8-12 inches (20.3-30.5 cm) long.[3] Locate the crack of the lobster’s head, which should be centered between the eyes and about an inch or two (2.5-5 cm) behind them. Keep the lobster still by holding it firmly with your nondominant hand. Then place the tip of your knife on this spot with the blade facing the front of the head.[4] 4 Slice down through the lobster’s head. Make a strong, swift cut with the knife between the eyes and through the entire head. This will cut off the lobster’s central nervous system, ensuring that it doesn’t feel pain.[5] Don’t be alarmed if the lobster’s legs, tail, and/or claws continue to move after you’ve killed the lobster. These are simply post mortem muscle twitches, which happen after death as a result of chemicals releasing from the lobster’s nerve endings.[6] 1 Freeze the lobster for 2 hours. Freezing live lobster for this amount of time will put it into a comatose-like state, which will greatly lessen the pain that it may feel. Put it in the freezer or close it in a container filled with ice for 2 hours or so.[7] 2 Fill a pan with saltwater. Get a pan that’s large and deep enough for the lobster to fit in. Fill the pan with cold saltwater, and place it on a burner on your stove.[8] 3 Put the lobster in the pan. Make sure the lobster is too cold to move at all to ensure that it’s in a comatose-like state. Then submerge the frozen lobster in the water and set the burner to low heat. 4 Slowly bring the water to a boil. After a couple of minutes, turn the heat up slightly. Continue turning the heat up in small amounts until the water is boiling. This shouldn’t take longer than about 10 minutes. The lobster will be dead before the water is brought to a boil.[9] Don’t put a lid on the pan. This will bring the water to a boil quicker, while the goal is to keep this process somewhat gradual.[10] 1 Get a CrustaStun machine. The CrustaStun is a more recent invention that was created to kill shellfish quickly, humanely, and without making too much of a mess. This machine works with electricity, and comes in both industrial-sized (for restaurants) and countertop models that are the size of a small suitcase.[11] 2 Fill the CrustaStun with saltwater and put the lobster in. The CrustaStun has a tank that you’ll need to fill with saltwater before using the machine.[12] Once you’ve done that, pick up the lobster by its back where its tail meets its body and place it onto the tray in the Crustastun.[13] Make sure that the lobster’s claws are held closed with rubber bands before you handle it. 3 Press the stun button. Close the lid and simply press the stun button and the lobster will be shocked. This will make the lobster go unconscious within half a second and die within ten.[14] 4 Remove the lobster from the CrustaStun. After you’ve pressed the stun button, open the lid and take the lobster off of the tray. Don’t worry about getting shocked; the electric current only affects the inside of the machine and is only possible when the lid is closed and the button is pressed.[15] Add New Question Question Where do I find a lobster to kill? A seafood market. Ask a Question Thanks This article was co-authored by wikiHow Staff. Our trained team of editors and researchers validate articles for accuracy and comprehensiveness. wikiHow's Content Management Team carefully monitors the work from our editorial staff to ensure that each article is backed by trusted research and meets our high quality standards. This article has been viewed 15,576 times. Co-authors: 4 Updated: March 29, 2019 Views: 15,576 Thanks to all authors for creating a page that has been read 15,576 times. Title: Humanely Killing a Lobster before Cooking: A Step-by-Step Guide Introduction: When it comes to cooking live lobsters, ensuring a humane and compassionate approach is essential. As responsible seafood enthusiasts, it is crucial to minimize any potential suffering. To that end, this article will provide you with a detailed guide on how to humanely kill a lobster before cooking, ensuring a more ethical culinary experience. How to humanely kill a lobster before cooking? To humanely kill a lobster before cooking, follow these steps: 1. Begin by chilling the lobster in the freezer for about 15-20 minutes; this helps sedate them and minimize their stress. 2. Set up a large pot of heavily salted water and bring it to a boil. Use approximately two tablespoons of salt per quart of water. 3. Take the lobster out of the freezer and place it on a cutting board, belly-up, with its claw bands intact. 4. Locate the cross-shaped groove on the lobster’s head, just above the eyes, called the “crosskill.” 5. Insert a sharp, sturdy knife into the crosskill and slice down, splitting the head and the body in half. 6. Quickly and carefully place the lobster into the boiling water, headfirst, ensuring a swift and humane death. This method induces immediate unconsciousness and eliminates suffering, making it the most widely approved way to humanely kill a lobster before cooking. FAQs: 1. Is there another humane method to kill a lobster before cooking? Yes, some experts recommend using a rapid electric stun method, which can render the lobster unconscious before boiling. 2. Why is it important to kill a lobster humanely? It is crucial to reduce any unnecessary suffering for ethical reasons, promoting responsible and compassionate practices. 3. Can lobsters feel pain? While there is ongoing debate among scientists, most agree that lobsters have a basic nervous system capable of feeling certain sensations. 4. Does chilling the lobster in the freezer harm it? No, chilling the lobster briefly in the freezer helps sedate it and reduce its stress levels without causing harm. 5. Is it necessary to use salt when boiling the water? Salt provides better flavor and helps maintain the lobster’s natural osmotic balance, resulting in a juicier and more tender meat. 6. How long does it take for a lobster to die in boiling water? When properly humanely killed, lobsters are rendered unconscious instantly, eliminating suffering during the cooking process. 7. Are there any alternatives to boiling as a cooking method? Indeed, there are several alternative cooking methods, including steaming, grilling, and baking, depending on personal preferences. 8. Can I cook a lobster without killing it first? Typically, live lobsters should be killed before cooking to ensure optimal taste and safety. Cooking a live lobster is not recommended. 9. How can I ensure the freshness of a live lobster? When purchasing lobsters, choose those that are lively, active, and demonstrate a strong response when touched or handled. 10. Can I slow cook a lobster to avoid killing it? Slow cooking methods are not recommended as they would prolong the lobster’s suffering and could potentially raise food safety concerns. 11. Should I remove the rubber bands before killing the lobster? No, it is advisable to keep the rubber bands on the lobster’s claws during the killing process to minimize any potential harm. 12. Can I use this humane method for other crustaceans, like crabs? While lobsters should be killed before cooking, crabs and other crustaceans are typically dispatched by plunging them into boiling water alive. Chef's Resource » How to humanely kill a lobster before cooking? Related Reads Lobster is best when killed immediately before cooking. Unless you bought a frozen lobster, what you brought home from the market is alive and kicking and that leaves the task up to the cook. What is the most humane way to dispatch a lobster? While plunging the live lobster into a pot of boiling water will surely be fatal, there is some debate as to whether it is cruel. The lobster's thrashing tail often makes a knocking sound inside the pot, sometimes loosening the lid, and that can make the cook—or those nearby waiting for dinner—a bit uncomfortable. But does the lobster suffer? The jury is still out on this one but most chefs agree that dispatching a lobster before cooking is the best approach. There are a few ways to kill a lobster. By doing it before cooking, you have the option to boil, bake, steam, or cook it in another way. Freeze the lobster by placing it in the freezer for 30 to 60 minutes before putting it headfirst into a pot of boiling water.A quicker option is to plunge a knife straight down into the carapace (part of the exoskeleton on the lobster's back). Place the tip of a sharp chef's knife behind the lobster's eyes, right below where the claws meet the body, and halfway to the first joint. Swiftly plunge the knife down through the head. The legs will continue to move a bit afterward but the lobster is dead.Many chefs prefer a combination of the two: After freezing for 30 minutes, plunge the knife into the lobster. Some chefs prefer just 15 minutes, which is enough to sedate the lobster without freezing the meat.As an alternative to freezing, you can desensitize the lobster by placing it in a large pot in the sink. Begin filling it with cold tap water and gradually increase the water temperature until it is very hot. You can then use the knife to dispatch the lobster. If you don't want to go through those steps and plan to boil the lobster, there's another option. Freeze the lobster for 30 to 60 minutes, then put it in the pot of boiling water head-first. While the boiling water, rather than the freezer, will kill it almost instantly, the cold will immobilize the lobster so it won't thrash about. Research indicates lobsters have no central nervous system or cerebral cortex to register stimuli. It's more like an insect—lobstermen often refer to them as such. While this makes it likely that it cannot feel pain, there is still some debate. Some studies have shown reactions of some sort to a stimulus in lobsters and crabs that may be caused by pain, but it remains unclear. Whether it is believed the lobsters experience pain or not, killing the lobster just before cooking is the preferred method. Perhaps this is for the benefit of the cook as a way to minimize trauma since most people are disconnected from the killing of animals they eat. This approach is also promoted by chefs who discovered that the lobster's muscles toughen with the shock of hitting the boiling water, meaning the meat will not be as tender. In Switzerland and some parts of Italy, cooking live lobster is banned. The animals are often stunned with electricity or killed in some manner before cooking. Electric lobster stunning devices are available. At a cost of a few thousand dollars, however, they're unreasonable for most home cooks who enjoy the occasional lobster. Professional chefs who regularly work with lobsters are equally divided on the issue. Generally, they use one of the methods to dispatch the lobster before cooking. It's always done quickly and speed seems to be the consensus on the most humane way to approach the task. The least humane way is to dismember a lobster without killing it first—or at least stunning it with cold. In some restaurants, chefs would remove the tail and legs while the lobster was still alive then skewer it with a deadly blow. Microwaving is considered another inhumane option. Somehow, you managed to get a fresh lobster. But before you can cook a lobster, you need to treat it. If you want to make a delicious lobster dish but don't know how to humanely kill lobsters, consult the world's top chefs. Read more: How to eat a whole lobster? Lobster Body Composition Lobster is distinguished by its high nutritional value and is expensive food. They also attract people thanks to their unique look made up of many different parts. The shell is the skeleton of the lobster and it cannot grow. Did you know that soft shell lobster has less meat than hard-shell lobster? The lobster's blood is colorless and when exposed to oxygen, it turns blue. The blue color is due to the iron that the lobster's body uses to transport oxygen. The most interesting part is the lobster's brain located in its throat. Instead of the brain, their kidneys are in the head. Furthermore, the lower part of the lobster, which is the abdomen, is the site of the nervous system. A lobster's nervous system is very primitive and similar to that of an insect. It has only about 100,000 nerve cells, compared with more than 100 billion of the human. Does A Lobster Feel Pain? Although research shows that lobsters do not have the central nervous system or cerebral cortex to register stimulation, and therefore the organism most likely does not feel pain, there is still some debate. One crab study showed that when there is an electric shock in a certain position, the crab begins to avoid that position, the study concludes that the crab feels pain and thus will stay away from the shock. But this did not convince everyone. Whether or not lobsters are believed to be in pain or not, killing them right before cooking is the preferred method. So maybe this humane approach is really about minimizing its own trauma. Or it was invented when chefs discovered that lobster meat is chewed from the shock of boiling water, meaning you'll have to chew more when you eat it. So killing it first can lead to softer meat. How To Kill A Lobster? First, you should pay attention to the lobsters caught in the lobster season, because they will be fresher and plump meat, the price is also more favorable. Now let's get to the lobster killing steps! Prepare the necessary lobster utensils to make lobster meat. Tools that need to be prepared in the processing of lobster are knives, scissors and cutting boards, small clean towels, gloves. Wash the lobster. When buying lobster, wash it, scrub away the dust that is on the lobster. Then cut 2 lobster antennae and lobster legs. Kill the lobster. There are several ways to kill a lobster before you put it in the pot. But the safest way is to put the lobster in the coldest part of the refrigerator or use ice to slow it down. The temperature you should keep your lobster cold is around 40 degrees F in an hour. Then there are those who believe that a combination of the two is best: After freezing for 30 minutes, place the lobster lying down on the cutting board. Then point the chef's knife just below where the claw meets and quickly cut through the head. The leg will continue to move a little after that but the lobster is practically dead. Or you can put the lobster straight into boiling water, at this time the cold lobster encounters a sudden rapid increase in temperature that will make its nervous system numb. The Other Ways To Kill A Lobster For those who don't want to grapple with a pounding lobster, there's another way. Place the lobster in a large pot in the sink. Start filling with cold water and gradually increase the water temperature until it is very hot. This will paralyze the organism. Now you can use the knife to cut the string and then put the lobster in the pot, or cut it in half for more cooking. If you don't want to go through any of these steps, put the lobster in the pot of boiling water, which will kill it instantly. It's the easiest and fastest way to kill a lobster, but it will ripen. Or you can remove the lobster tail from the ribcage without destroying the anterior nervous system. Smash vertically to the head while the lobster is still alive. Another quicker option is to stab the pointed end of a sharp knife straight down behind the lobster's eye. Microwave or drowning by putting its head in boiling water first. Please watch the video below! Notes When Killing A Lobster Live lobsters are very perishable and must be handled promptly. It's best to cook lobsters as soon as they buy, but they can be refrigerated for up to two days if needed. Do not drop lobsters into tap water. They are saltwater organisms, and freshwater kills them. ➡ Do not leave lobsters in sealed containers. ➡ Do not store lobsters in stagnant water, causing pollution. ➡ Wear gloves when preparing them ➡ Use clean kitchen utensils, sharp cutlery. So now buy some lobsters and try it! There are many delicious dishes made from lobster. However, you need to know how to kill a lobster in order to make great dishes out of it. Or you just need order cooked lobster on Fishermen's Net, lobsters will be shipped from Maine straight to your door. Visit our blog for more useful tips related to the lobster. Feel free to contact us via the below contact information if you have any further questions or requests. Website: www.mualobster.com Address: 849 Forest Ave, Portland, ME 04103. Tel: +1 (207) 772-3565. Skip to content For many people, food is dead, processed, and packaged by the time it reaches them. We know that our chicken breasts came from a chicken or that a piece of cod was once swimming around somewhere. Live lobsters are a unique food in that they must be cooked or processed quickly soon after they are out of their cold seawater medium.But the tradition of cooking lobsters alive disturbs people. The idea of plunging the creature into a boiling pot of water to meet a painful death can be a bit off-putting, but it might not be the whole story. Here’s how to kill a lobster without feeling bad about it. There is no shortage of ideas about whether lobsters feel pain or not. Lobstermen refer to them as ‘bugs’ because they are much the same as insects, and we don’t worry about squashing them. The truth is it may be a long time before we really understand the lobster’s nervous system.In the meantime, if you still want to cook lobster, use a humane and proven approach to quickly dispatch the lobster and enjoy your lobster dinner.To better understand lobster anatomy, it is worth knowing that they are in the same group of species as insects, crabs, barnacles, and shrimp. Lobsters have a hard outer shell called an exoskeleton but don’t have an inner skeleton or bones like a mammal.They also have blue blood due to the presence of copper in it. Another interesting fact is that their nervous system is simpler than that of an insect. Neither insects nor lobsters have a brain. And they have around 100,000 neurons – compare this to 100 billion in a human being.Neurons are the basic building blocks of the brain and nervous system. They are used to do everything from responding to our environment to telling our muscles to work. The fewer neurons, the less aware and intelligent a species is.The big question, then, is this – do lobsters really feel pain? One of the reasons that people are so concerned with the common ways to kill lobsters for cooking is the idea that you are causing pain to the creature. But can it actually feel pain?Boston biologist Joseph Ayers, who studies lobster neurobiology at Northeastern University, says crustaceans lack the neural anatomy to feel pain. We know their nervous system is like an insect’s, and we know they are very much less likely to feel pain than a mammal.The Lobster Institute of Maine, for example, says that while a lobster might twitch its tail when placed in boiling water, it is a reaction to sudden stimulus (movement) rather than suddenly feeling pain from the hot water. As far as humanely killing a lobster, Ayers believes plunging a lobster headfirst into boiling water is the best method.A lobster is not brainless but possesses segmented ganglia (nerve clusters) to control most of its overt behaviors. It does not have a true centralized brain, and it is not comparable to the brains of mammals—especially humans. Interestingly enough, there are a few animals that function without a brain.The neuron count of a human is 100 billion; insects, for instance, have about 100,000. If you cut the head off some insects, the segmented ganglia can still function. The human brain can process information, have long-term memory, multi-task, and more. The Lobster Institute suggests that lobsters do not have complex brains that allow them to think and process pain.A study from Norway in 2005 found that they couldn’t feel pain because they didn’t have anything to feel it with. Think about it – when you stub your toe, your brain tells you it hurts. You couldn’t process that signal if you didn’t have a brain.Another thing lobsters don’t have are vocal chords – so the story about lobsters screaming when being cooked is an urban myth! In fact, the noise is more likely caused by air escaping from their bodies than anything.That hasn’t stopped Switzerland, however, which has introduced a complete ban on cooking lobsters alive. To comply with the new laws, lobster sellers and chefs must either put the lobster to death or knock it out before cooking. Parts of Italy have a similar rule, backed by a fine of around 500 euros for anyone caught breaking it.Whether you think that a lack of brain means no pain or are a little more concerned that this might not be the whole story, there are ways to kill a lobster quickly and efficiently. In fact, there are several answers to the question of how to kill a lobster humanely.Lobsters live and thrive in cold water. These sea creatures are poikilotherms, meaning they cannot regulate their body temperatures. So, they migrate to warmer, deeper offshore waters in the winter months. When lobsters are most active in the summer months, they migrate inshore and get stuck in traps searching for food. This is why summertime is often considered the peak lobster season.Keep the cantankerous crustaceans very cold on ice or in the fridge to quiet them. For example, a lobster held at 48° F is fairly active. Yet at 40° F, its metabolism slows down and becomes considerably less active. Sluggish, inactive lobsters are easier and safer to handle.At LobsterAnywhere, we aim to keep our Maine lobsters extra cool in transit so they arrive in great shape. See how we pack live lobsters so they arrive super fresh.Death may ensue when a lobster is exposed to a rapid rise in temperature, while decreases in temperature reduce stress. Therefore, keep lobsters in the coldest part of your refrigerator before cooking. To sedate or even dispatch a lobster, chill it in the freezer for 10-15 minutes.This is one of the most commonly used solutions on how to dispatch a live lobster. The key to this process is to have the water to boiling point before you begin. Hold the lobster around the middle to avoid those claws and put it head first into the water. It will die quickly. Boiling water is also the best way to cook the lobster, so you can leave it in there and carry on the cooking process. If you’re a newbie, keeping the elastic bands on the claws to protect yourself is a good idea.See our guide for more tips on handling and storing live lobsters.The other common way to kill a live lobster is with a very sharp knife. This method instantly kills the creature with one swift cut before cooking. As mentioned above, storing the lobster in the freezer will keep it dormant, making it easier and safer to handle.Place lobster on a flat surface or cutting board. Use a ribbed sheet pan to catch any liquid that spills out. Quickly plunge the tip of a sharp chef’s knife right below its eyes. You will see a cross or X. Cut through the head and continue cutting through the tail to split the entire lobster. Alternatively, you can simply remove the tail. Don’t worry if the legs keep moving for a little while afterward; this is an involuntary reflex. Remove the small sac at the base of the head and the digestive tract running along the center of the tail. Clean out the dark coral or roe, present only in female lobsters. Clean out the tomalley (liver and pancreas), the light green, runny material present in the lobster head, and, in some cases, on the exposed flesh of the tail.One of the newer ways to kill a lobster humanely is with a specially designed device called a CrustaStun. The idea is simple – it uses a strong electrical charge that electrocutes the lobster and kills it in seconds. British lawyer Simon Buckhaven invented the crustacean zapper in 2006.With a price tag of about $3000, it’s unlikely to make it on the shelves of Bed, Bad, and Beyond. A jolt of electricity is favored by some ethical treatment of animal groups who see it as a better option than boiling or the knife.As with every dilemma, there are people who find somewhat novel approaches to the topic. One example is the idea of hypnotizing the lobster. That’s right – you stand the live lobster on its head and rub between the eyes up and down constantly.This puts it in a ‘hypnotic state’ that will leave it standing on its head without you holding it. You can then take a knife and split it down the middle without it ever waking up. Or so we have been told.The latest approach to the question of humanely killing a lobster is a theory that marijuana somehow lessens the lobster’s pain. A Maine restaurateur thinks so. She used pot smoke in an attempt to ‘medicate’ the lobster before it hit the hot water bath and floated to death in a gentle, drug-induced haze!Can lobsters get high? For people, cannabis has been shown to relieve pain, but lobster is not people. The Maine state health department did not think it was a good idea to sell lobsters tainted with marijuana and put the kibosh on the ‘lobster pot dispensary’.For seafood lovers who are conscientious about their food choices, it’s important to know how to kill a lobster properly without feeling remorse. The freezer method, which is outlined in this article, is a humane and effective way to ensure that the lobster meets a quick and painless death.By using this approach, not only can ethical concerns be addressed, but the lobster’s flavor and texture can also be preserved, enhancing the overall dining experience. So, the next time you prepare lobster, remember to follow these steps to enjoy a delectable meal with a clear conscience.Lobsters have a strong exoskeleton and muscular tails, but they rely on a delicate balance of temperature regulation to survive. They also possess a complex nervous system that makes them sensitive to pain and discomfort. Considering this, it