

The Volpi Lobster Roll

Purists, beware. We are well aware of the fervor with which one will defend one's preparation of a lobster roll. And there are abominations out there: deep-fried, as a grilled cheese, on brioche with avocado — gack. We didn't want to mess with perfection (lightly toasted top-loading hot dog bun, minimal mayo, small piece of lettuce), but we did want to find a way to slip our tasty pancetta into the mix. A little cured pork can make most anything taste better, right? So we crisped up just a little, melted butter in the fat to toast the buns, and sprinkled the crunchy bits on top. Lobster love with pork belly. What could go wrong?

See Cook's Note on how to remove lobster meat from the shell.

Ingredients

2 (1¼-pound) live lobsters
4 slices pancetta, chopped (about ¼ cup)
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
1 stalk celery, finely diced
1/4 cup mayonnaise
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
Pinch kosher salt, if needed
4 split-top hot dog rolls
4 pieces romaine lettuce

special equipment

mallet or heavy knife to crack claws
scissors to cut lobster shell

Directions

Bring a large pot with 1 inch of water to a boil over high heat. Add the lobsters, head first, and cover. Steam until the lobsters turn bright red and an antennae is easily pulled off, 10 to 15 minutes. If the foamy water starts to boil over, turn the heat down a little. Remove the lobsters and let them cool enough so you can handle them.

Meanwhile, put the pancetta in a medium nonstick skillet and turn the heat to medium. Cook until the fat renders and the pancetta crisps, about 4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove the pieces with a slotted spoon to a paper-towel-lined plate. Turn the heat to low, add the butter to the skillet and melt, swirling the pan. Pour the pancetta butter into a small bowl.

Remove the meat from the lobsters and cut it into bite-size chunks. Mix with the celery, mayo and lemon juice. Taste, and add salt if necessary.

Return the skillet you cooked the pancetta in to medium heat. Brush the sides of the hot dog rolls with the pancetta butter. Cook 2 at a time until toasted and golden brown, flipping, 1 to 2 minutes total.

Lay a lettuce leaf in the bottom of each roll. Divide the meat among the rolls. Sprinkle pancetta over the top of each.

Cook's Note

When the lobsters are cool enough to handle, twist the body from the tail and remove the claws. There is some meat in the body, mostly under the joint once the little legs are torn off. That's too much trouble for some people, but if you love lobster, you'll make the effort. Right?

There are several strategies to get the prized meat out of the tail. One way is to remove the middle flap at the bottom of the tail and use your thumb to push the meat out the top. Or you can use scissors to cut down the middle of the undershell and peel it back to reveal the meat. If the lobsters are soft shells, you can easily break the claws and knuckles with your hands and dig out the meat. If they are hard, you'll need lobster crackers, the back of a chef's knife or kitchen shears to get at it.

total time: 35 minutes

active prep: 35 minutes

serves: 4

difficulty: *easy*