

# what's the dish?

## Buttermilk-Battered Soft Shell Crabs with Sweet Corn Relish

**Chesapeake Beach Resort and Spa, Chesapeake Beach**  
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*By Kelsey Collins*  
*Photos by Tony Lewis, Jr.*

*Built in 1947, the Rod 'N' Reel restaurant at Chesapeake Beach Resort and Spa holds a bounty of memories for the guests that have been going there for much of its 64-year history. The restaurant has been owned by the same family for three generations, but keeps up with the changing culinary landscape, using seasonal, local ingredients in its repertoire of classic Chesapeake fare. Executive Chef Joseph Misero shows us how to make a Buttermilk-Battered Soft-Shell Crab, a seasonal dish that appears on the restaurant's menu sporadically throughout the summer.*



*Buttermilk-Battered Soft-Shell Crab is a seasonal specialty on the menu at Rod 'N' Reel at the Chesapeake Beach Resort and Spa.*

*What's Up?: How did your culinary career begin?*

*Chef Joseph Misero:* I grew up in an Italian kitchen with my mother and grandmother showing me the ropes. Some of my fondest memories were centered on the holidays, where I would help make the cookies during Christmas and all the pies and pastries during Easter. Like most people watching television in the '60s and '70s, we were viewing the new front-runner in the culinary field, Julia Childs. Granted, I was watching reruns, but her show and her love of cooking inspired me

to want to work in the culinary field. As the circle of my culinary life continues, I was given the honor to cook for Julia Childs and thank her for her inspiration at her 85th birthday dinner party held for her in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1997.

*WU?: What is your favorite food?*

*JM:* That is a hard one to answer; I guess I would have to say Osso Bucco Milanese with saffron risotto; but maybe my wife Julie's Vietnamese Pho soup, which, by the way, was the first dish that she ever



cooked for me or her Chocolate Hazelnut Torte, or it could be my mother-in-law's Maryland Crab Soup. It could be my mother's Stuffed Cornish Game Hen. Who am I kidding? I love food.

*WU?: What kitchen tool or gadget could you not cook without?*

*JM:* I am a very straightforward chef. As long as I have a sharp knife I can get by without any trouble.

*WU: What's your favorite local ingredient?*

*JM:* My favorite ingredients have to be soft-shell crabs and local tomatoes. Nothing says summer like a well-seasoned soft shell crab and local tomatoes right off the vine. They are just amazing.

*WU: What's more important to you: Local or organic? (Or neither?)*

*JM:* With local items, you know you are getting the freshest ingredients, and they normally have a small carbon footprint, which means I can get our purchased food to our guests' table with the least amount of damage to our precious Maryland environment. Another local initiative that we are currently implementing is The Maryland Oyster Recovery Partnership, which takes all our discarded oyster and clam shells and puts them back in the Bay to aid in the creation of new oyster reefs throughout the Chesapeake, which also will keep the shells out of the local landfills. This process adds to a great effort of cleaning and revitalizing the great Chesapeake Bay.

*WU: Is there a particular wine/drink that goes well with this dish?*

*JM:* Casa Lapostelle Sauvignon Blanc.



## Buttermilk-Battered Soft Shell Crabs with Sweet Corn Relish Serves 4

4 to 8 jumbo soft shell crabs, cleaned  
 Seasoned flour (Recipe below)  
 1 cup buttermilk  
 1 cup of milk  
 Corn relish (recipe below)  
 Lemon beurre blanc (recipe below)  
 Baby mache greens to garnish (optional)

Mix the milk and buttermilk together in a large bowl and keep refrigerated until you're ready to batter the crabs.

- 1)** Dredge the soft-shell crab into the seasoned flour mixture, shaking off any excess flour. Transfer it to the buttermilk mixture, and then place it back in the flour. Be sure to coat the crab completely while keeping the legs separated in the flour.
- 2)** Heat a large frying pan with oil to 350 degrees or get your home-fryer ready. Lay the crab into the frying oil on its back, which allows the legs to fan out and curl up. Cook for one to two minutes, or until golden brown, and then flip it over to the other side, cooking for an additional minute. Remove the crab from the oil and lay it on paper towels to drain. Repeat with additional crabs.

### Seasoned Flour

4 cups all-purpose flour  
 1/4 cup cornstarch  
 1 1/2 tablespoons onion powder  
 1 1/2 tablespoons garlic powder  
 1 tablespoon ground white pepper  
 1 1/2 tablespoon iodized salt

- 3)** Blend all ingredients together until well combined and set aside in a vessel to be used for dredging.

### Corn Relish

2 ears corns, steamed and kernels cut off the cob  
 1 jalapeno, minced  
 1/2 cup red onion, minced  
 1/2 cup vine-ripened Maryland tomatoes, diced  
 1 lemon, juiced  
 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil  
 Salt and pepper to taste  
 Fresh chervil, cilantro, or chives to taste



*Executive Chef Joseph Misero heads the kitchen at Rod 'N' Reel at the Chesapeake Beach Resort and Spa.*

- 4)** Combine all ingredients into a bowl and season to taste. Refrigerate until ready to use.

### Lemon Beurre Blanc Sauce

1 cup white wine  
 2 sprigs fresh thyme (or a pinch of dry thyme)  
 1 tablespoon shallot, minced  
 6 black peppercorns  
 1 teaspoon white vinegar  
 1 bay leaf  
 1 cup heavy whipping cream  
 1/4 pound unsalted butter, cut into chunks  
 1 lemon, juiced

- 5)** In a one-quart saucepan, bring the white wine, thyme, shallot, peppercorn, vinegar, and bay leaf to a simmer. Once the liquid has nearly evaporated, add the cream and reduce over low heat until thickened. Add the butter one chunk at a time and stir until completely melted and fully incorporated into the cream. Add the lemon juice, stir to incorporate, and then season to taste with salt and pepper. Strain the sauce into a large bowl and keep in a warm spot (not over direct heat, or it will break).
- 6)** Cut the crabs in half with a chef's knife and plate them by standing them up on the cut surface with the legs in the air. Surround the base of the crab with corn relish, then drizzle the lemon beurre blanc around the edges of the plate. Garnish with mache greens.