



KINDER KITCHENS
with Crustacean Compassion

Chefs, make your
kitchen a kinder one



www.crustaceancompassion.org



Welcome to Kinder Kitchens

As chefs, industry leaders, and consumer champions you have the opportunity and responsibility to uphold the law, reflect public opinion, and present humanely-prepared, high-quality food.

The information provided here will support you to reduce, and ultimately end, unnecessary suffering in your kitchen, while maintaining exceptional culinary standards.

Provenance is key. Your guests will expect to know, and increasingly ask, where their food comes from. It is not only rewarding to be able to tell them exactly how and where you are acting to protect the welfare and sustainability of these precious animals, but also a legal and moral obligation.

Under the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022, all decapod crustaceans, including crabs, lobsters, and prawns, are legally recognised as sentient beings capable of feeling pain and distress. This means that welfare must be considered at all stages of their 'sea-to-plate' journey, including capture, transport, storage, and ultimately dispatch.

Chefs must take the opportunity to ask suppliers how crustaceans are caught (avoiding overfishing and harmful methods), how they are transported (duration, conditions, water or moist environments), and how they are stored (density, water quality, temperature control).

Ensuring humane handling throughout the supply chain, sourcing from processors using humane stunning methods before dispatch, and indeed adopting these standards into your own kitchens, helps you drive higher welfare standards in the seafood industry while delivering quality produce to your customers.

Chefs can and do make a difference

It is up to all of us to learn, lead, and stand up for high-welfare, ethical, and sustainable food. We hope this information empowers you to make positive changes and lead a Kinder Kitchen.

As chefs, you have the power to reduce unnecessary suffering in your kitchen while maintaining exceptional culinary standards.



What is a Kinder Kitchen?

A Kinder Kitchen is one that puts compassion at the heart of seafood preparation, whether you choose to work with live crustaceans or not.

If you handle live crustaceans it is important to ensure they are treated humanely at every stage of the supply chain, from sea to plate. That starts from the moment they leave the ocean or pond to the moment they are served. Restaurants must make sure that high-welfare practices have been used during the capture, transport, storage and handling of the crustaceans they buy. Every step matters. While all steps are vital, one of the most critical responsibilities for chefs working with live crustaceans is ensuring that the animals are dispatched humanely.

But even if you don't handle live animals directly, sourcing still matters for a Kinder Kitchen.

Chefs and restaurants who **choose to serve only frozen or chilled crustaceans** remove the need to carry out live storage, handling, or dispatch in-house. However, even when working with pre-dispatched products, it remains essential to ensure that high welfare standards have been upheld throughout the supply chain.



Why run a Kinder Kitchen?

There are many benefits for chefs, restaurants and foodservice businesses in running a kinder kitchen that treats crustaceans with compassion.

- It's the right thing to do
- Stay ahead of evolving legal requirements
- Tell a good sea-to-plate story for your patrons
- Provide ethical seafood for conscious diners
- Improved morale for kitchen and front-of-house staff
- Better food quality due to reduced stress
- Competitive advantage over low-welfare rivals



Science

300+
studies reviewed

Decapod crustaceans are sentient animals capable of experiencing pain, distress, and other emotions. Pain involves both a reflexive reaction to harm and a conscious, negative experience that leads to behavioural change. Scientific studies over the past two decades have shown that crustaceans respond to injury by tending to wounds, avoiding harmful stimuli, and altering behaviour when given pain relief. These are all strong indicators of sentience.

In 2021, a government-commissioned report by the London School of Economics reviewed

over 300 studies and concluded there is robust evidence that crustaceans feel pain. This led to their formal recognition as sentient animals in UK law. Despite this recognition, common slaughter methods - such as boiling alive, dismemberment, and chilling - remain widely used, even though they are considered painful and inhumane.

Given their proven capacity to suffer, these practices must be avoided, and humane alternatives like electrical stunning prior to dispatch should be adopted.



Legislation

The UK's Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022 marked a historic step by legally recognising decapod crustaceans as sentient, and requiring government policy to consider their welfare. In January 2026 the Animal Sentience Committee recommended their inclusion in all other animal welfare legislation, including the Animal Welfare Act (2006).

Under the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (WATOK) Regulations, it is illegal to kill crustaceans in a way that causes avoidable pain or distress. In the Animal Welfare Strategy published in December 2025, the government stated it will publish guidance on ***"which methods of killing decapods are compatible with the existing welfare at time of killing legal requirements, including by clarifying that live boiling is not an acceptable killing method."***

Similarly, the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Orders (WATEO) prohibit causing suffering during transport, yet enforcement is weak and there are no species-specific standards for water quality, temperature, or oxygen. With no official guidance on handling and storage, the safest and most ethical approach is to avoid transporting and keeping live crustaceans in kitchens altogether.

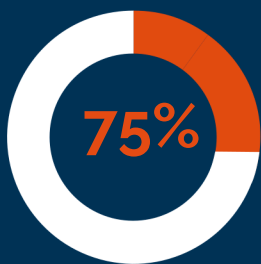


Consumer and public support

Consumers are increasingly concerned about the welfare of the animals they eat. Ethical sourcing and humane treatment are no longer just “nice-to-have” – they’re part of what customers expect from modern, responsible restaurants.

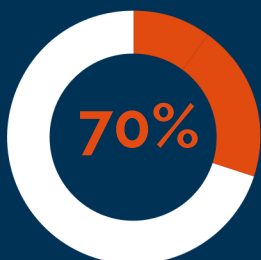
By adopting humane practices, you can:

- Ensure your seafood aligns with high ethical and sustainability standards
- Meet rising customer expectations for humane food preparation
- Improve the taste and quality of your seafood dishes



Demand for humane dispatch methods:

A massive 75% percent of the public support requiring humane slaughter methods for crabs and lobsters in restaurants and seafood markets*.



Regulated humane transport and slaughter standards for decapod crustaceans:

70% of respondents support the enforcement of regulated humane transport and slaughter standards for decapod crustaceans, showing strong demand for humane treatment throughout the supply chain*.

With public awareness on the rise and other sectors taking action on crustacean welfare, there will be no excuse for restaurant kitchens to fall behind.

* All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,223 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 24th - 25th February 2025. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

The journey from sea to plate



Capture

Caught in pots/creels
= higher welfare



Avoiding mutilations

Mutilations like claw nicking,
declawing and eyestalk ablation



Storage

Proper water quality
+ no fridge/freezer or freshwater



Transport

Short, direct journeys + species
appropriate conditions



Kitchen storage

Proper water quality
+ no fridge/freezer or freshwater



Humane dispatch

Humane handling, electrical
stunning prior to dispatch



Preparation

Trained staff and correct
equipment



Cooking

Cook only after humane
dispatch, maintain quality



Service

Responsible sourcing builds
customer trust

Crustacean welfare doesn't start at your kitchen door. Regardless of whether you choose to buy live or processed crustaceans, responsible sourcing means ensuring live crabs, lobsters, and other crustaceans are transported and stored with minimal stress and suffering before they reach your kitchen. The journey from sea to plate can be filled with welfare threats that should be avoided.

The journey...



Capture method



Have the crustaceans been caught in pots/creels or via trawling as bycatch?



Mutilations (prior to arrival in your kitchen)



Chefs should ensure, as far as possible, that the crustaceans sourced have **not** been subjected to painful mutilations such as claw nicking and declawing whilst alive for crabs, or eyestalk ablation for prawns.



Storage



If you store live crustaceans in your kitchen, then you are responsible or guaranteeing high-welfare storage conditions.

Live crustaceans should not be stored in:

- Fridges/freezers
- Dry containers
- Freshwater (for marine species)

These methods do not 'stun' crustaceans, and cause pain.

Crustaceans should be stored in appropriate water tanks, with the following considerations:

- Correct water quality, pH and salinity (salt level)
- Lighting – bright lights are harmful to crustaceans as they prefer dim lighting
- Shelter and enrichment – can they engage in natural behaviours?
- Overcrowding – this can cause poor water quality and fighting

Every member of staff who handles live crustaceans should be trained in humane handling skills.



Transport



Have the crustaceans been transported in high-welfare conditions that are appropriate for their species?
Is the journey as short and direct as it could be?

Humane stunning and dispatch

Whether crustaceans are dispatched in your kitchens or, alternatively, bought already processed, humane stunning and dispatch are essential for a Kinder Kitchen.



Scientific evidence to date shows that the most humane and effective method for killing crabs, lobsters, and other decapod crustaceans is electrical stunning followed by mechanical killing (either double spiking or full body splitting) performed by trained professionals prior to cooking.



Electrical stunning

Humane dispatch begins with stunning, the process of making the animal completely insensible to pain and distress. Currently, electrical stunning is the only method shown to achieve this for crabs, lobsters, and some other decapod crustaceans. Research is on going for optimal species specific parameters. Electrical stunning ensures crustaceans are knocked out, and insensible to pain, before being killed.

With effective electrical stunning, the animal loses consciousness in less than a second, and can be quickly killed before coming around.

Electrical stunning:

- Reduces suffering and aligns with legal and ethical obligations
- Maintains meat quality and customer trust
- Demonstrates your commitment to professional, responsible practice

This technology is available to chefs and restaurants, there is currently one table-top stunner available in the UK: the Crustastun, manufactured by Mitchell & Cooper www.mitchellcooper.co.uk, but the market is evolving and more technology may be emerging.



Humane dispatch

Chefs frequently ask one key question: What is the most humane way to kill a crab or lobster?

It's an essential question for any kitchen that serves or handles live crustaceans. Many traditional methods - especially boiling animals alive or heating them slowly to boiling - cause significant and prolonged distress. When exposed to extreme heat, crabs and lobsters thrash, struggle, and attempt to escape, all clear indications that they are experiencing pain and suffering.

To be humane, dispatch must begin with effective stunning, followed by swift mechanical killing before cooking.

Splitting and spiking

Mechanical killing can provide a relatively swift death when performed correctly and only after effective electrical stunning.

Crabs should be dispatched using double spiking, targeting their two main nerve centres. Lobsters and similar species must be full-body split along the underside mid-line to destroy all ganglia. Splitting only the head of a lobster and spiking crabs just once are not reliable methods of quick dispatch, as not all the ganglia (or 'brain') are destroyed, and cannot be considered humane or effective. However, even full-body splitting and double spiking without stunning carries risks:

- **Individual skill level** – aptitude can vary between chefs
- **Fatigue** – repetitive tasks can cause standards to slip
- **Duration** – crustaceans can take several seconds to die

Because inaccurate cuts can cause severe suffering, these methods should be carried out only by trained, competent staff, immediately after stunning and before cooking.

While the risks associated with manual dispatch are acknowledged, if an electrical stunning machine is unavailable (e.g. due to power outage), manual dispatch may be considered dependent on it being conducted exclusively by a trained chef using suitable, high-quality

It should be noted however that definitive evidence of methodology and welfare consistency is lacking.

Inhumane stunning and dispatch

Methods which should not be used:

- Freezing/chilling/ice slurry
- Boiling, air frying or thermal cooking whilst conscious
- Dismembering whilst conscious
- Drowning in freshwater
- Suffocation in air

Boiling may be considered humane **only** if preceded by effective stunning that ensures the animal remains insensible until death. **Boiling live, conscious crustaceans is inhumane and must never be practised.**

What can you do?

Chefs wanting to run a Kinder Kitchen can start by choosing from the following practices:

1. Opt for chilled or frozen supply

Choosing pre-processed crustaceans eliminates the responsibility of looking after and killing live crustaceans, without compromising on quality, flavour or taste.



“Since the event we did with The Chefs’ Forum in Cornwall, and the Kinder Kitchens campaign, we have utilised frozen produce in many of our dishes without taste or quality compromise. Indeed, following several events we have noticed a 20% reduction in demand for live lobster, and a 30% increase in sales of frozen lobster tails.”

Lauren Parker, Sales & Marketing Director,
Ritter Courivaud and Ritter Fresh

Ritter Fresh
specialists in meat, fish and game

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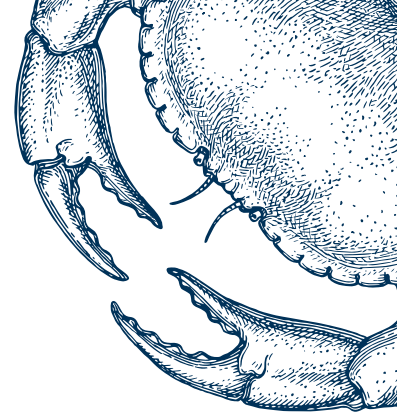
“At The Tower Hotel, London, we are committed to combining luxury dining with responsible sourcing. By choosing frozen lobster tails, we guarantee year-round consistency, premium quality, and efficiency for our brigade, while reducing waste and ensuring sustainable practices. From grilled lobster to sliders and refined canapés, these dishes remain favourites with our high-end guests. Supporting Kinder Kitchens is a natural step for us, showcasing our dedication to ethical kitchen practices.”

Santosh Ravimony, Executive Chef,
The Tower Hotel, London



THE
TOWER
HOTEL

by **thistle**



2. Choose humane treatment of live crustaceans

If you handle live decapod crustaceans in your kitchen, it is essential to ensure their welfare by using only humane dispatch methods and maintaining the highest standards of care for live crustaceans stored on site.



“As chefs, we have a duty to show respect for every animal we prepare, especially creatures like crab and lobster, which are so often overlooked. From the moment they’re harvested to how they’re handled and dispatched in our kitchens, their welfare is in our hands. Treating crustaceans humanely isn’t just about legislation; it’s about leading a kitchen with integrity. If we claim to care about sustainability and provenance, that care must extend to how we end a life as well.”

Merrick Webber, Chef and Kinder Kitchens Ambassador





Join the Kinder Kitchens movement

By adopting humane methods to source and kill crustaceans, your kitchen can lead the way in high-welfare seafood preparation, aligning with evolving legislation while maintaining culinary excellence.

Join the **Kinder Kitchens campaign** today and let your guests know that you are fully in support of higher welfare practice in your kitchen.

Here's what you can do now

- Adopt humane stunning and dispatch methods
- Ensure high welfare standards in your kitchens
- Look at incorporating frozen/chilled crustacean products in your menus
- Source only from high-welfare suppliers
- Tell other chefs and guests about it and help raise awareness!

Chefs have a crucial role to play in spreading the word about crustacean welfare issues.

Together, we can all build a better future, for crustaceans, for seafood lovers, and for a thriving and sustainable food industry.

Further reading

Crustacean Compassion publishes evidence-based guidance, reports and educational resources to support better understanding and improved welfare of decapod crustaceans across the food industry. These publications offer detailed insights into welfare risks, practical solutions, and evolving expectations for responsible practice, making them valuable further reading for policymakers, industry professionals, and anyone interested in humane seafood supply chains.

The Snapshot: Industry Benchmark on Decapod Crustacean Welfare

The Snapshot is the first UK industry benchmark assessing the management and reporting practices of 30 UK companies, including seafood processors, suppliers and all major supermarkets. It evaluates how they address crustacean welfare across the supply chain, from capture and handling to storage and slaughter, scoring businesses against key welfare criteria to recognise progress and highlight areas needing improvement.

Created in 2022 and repeated annually, The Snapshot helps companies raise welfare standards and promotes greater transparency and accountability. Its findings support more humane treatment of decapods and deliver benefits for the animals, the seafood industry, and consumers seeking responsibly sourced products.



www.crustaceancompassion.org/the-snapshot



All of these publications are available to read or download from the Crustacean Industry Welfare Hub or Crustacean Compassion websites.

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Decapod Crustaceans in the Food Chain: from Capture to Killing

Since 2022, UK legislation has formally recognised decapod crustaceans as sentient beings. As a result, it is essential that their physical and mental welfare is considered at every stage of the capture-to-killing process. Current industry practices may therefore need to be reviewed and adapted where necessary to reduce suffering.

These Codes of Practice provide a framework of good-practice guidance for all those handling decapod crustaceans within the food chain. Their aim is to support, encourage and facilitate the protection and continual improvement of welfare standards to ensure that these animals are treated humanely and responsibly.

www.crustaceancompassion.org/crustacean-compassion-code-of-practice



Sea-to-Plate: The welfare journey of decapod crustaceans

Every year billions of animals like crabs, lobsters, nephrops (langoustines), prawns and crayfish are captured and transported around the world by sea, air and land for commercial purposes. In the UK alone, over 420 million decapod crustaceans are landed by UK vessels into UK ports.

From sea to plate, these animals undergo multiple stages such as capture, storage, transport and slaughter. Each of these presents significant stressors that can lead to poor welfare outcomes, increased disease prevalence or higher mortality. This publication maps the full journey and highlights the points at which welfare risks are greatest, enabling industry and policymakers to identify where improvements will have the most impact.

www.crustaceancompassion.org/sea-to-plate-welfare-report





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with Crustacean Compassion

About Crustacean Compassion

Crustacean Compassion is an evidence-led animal welfare charity that works with food industry professionals to facilitate a kinder sea-to-plate journey for decapod crustaceans.

You can find more information about Kinder Kitchens and crustacean welfare on our website

www.crustaceancompassion.org

Or if you'd like to talk to us, contact Jane Bush, Senior Corporate Engagement Advisor, on j.bush@crustaceancompassion.org

Join the Crustacean Industry Welfare Hub

www.ciwhub.org



**Crustacean Industry
Welfare Hub**

Working together for decapod welfare