

Soft-Shell Crabs With Curry Butter

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

Ingredients

- ½teaspoon cumin seeds
- ½teaspoon coriander seeds
- ½teaspoon fennel seeds
- 5cloves
- ¼teaspoon grated nutmeg
- ¼teaspoon ground black pepper
- ½teaspoon cayenne
- ½teaspoon turmeric
- ½pound unsalted butter (2 sticks), softened
- ½teaspoon grated garlic
- 2teaspoons grated ginger
- ½teaspoon kosher salt
- Zest and juice of 1 lime, and lime wedges for garnish
- ¼cup unsalted roasted almonds, crushed
- ½cup chopped scallions
- 1cup rice flour, for dusting (optional)
- 4large soft-shell crabs, about 5 ounces each, cleaned
- 8ounces tender pea shoots or baby spinach

Directions

Step 1: Make the curry butter: Put the cumin seeds, coriander seeds, fennel seeds and cloves in a dry skillet over medium heat. When spices are lightly toasted and fragrant, after a minute or so, grind them to a powder in a mortar or electric spice mill. Add nutmeg, black pepper, cayenne and turmeric.

Step 2: Put butter in a bowl. Add spices, garlic, ginger, salt and lime zest and juice. Mash seasonings into butter with a wooden spoon. Add crushed almonds and scallions, then mix until well incorporated. (May be prepared several hours ahead, or up to 1 day in advance.)

Step 3: Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add 3 tablespoons curry butter, let melt and swirl pan to distribute. Dust crabs lightly with rice flour, if using. When butter is foamy, add crabs in one layer and raise heat. Let crabs cook 3 minutes, then turn, using tongs, and cook 3 minutes on the other side. (Be careful, as crabs may spatter.) Remove crabs and keep warm.

Step 4: Add 4 tablespoons curry butter to pan and let sizzle. Add pea shoots and cook briefly until wilted, 1 minute or less.

Step 5: Arrange crabs on a warm platter or individual plates. Garnish with wilted pea shoots and lime wedges. Spoon melted curry butter from pan over crabs and serve at once.

