

OFF DUTY CHRISTMAS EVE

-WITH- *Chef Todd*
-AND-
Nitsa Knoll

- BY ERIN JIMCOSKY -

Executive Chef Todd Knoll of Jordan Winery in Healdsburg, California may just be one of the luckiest guys in the business. After a long year slinging sous-vide green almonds and milk-fed lamb, he gets a break to enjoy the holidays with friends and family. Every year, Todd and his wife, Nitsa, host their family for a Christmas Eve crab boil. They chose crab because it only requires minimal work, leaving them time to relax with family. The flavor payload is off the charts.



DUNGENESS CRAB BOIL { SERVES 6 }

- ◆ 6 live Dungeness crabs
- ◆ 3 gal. of seawater or a seasoned equivalent
- ◆ 2 fennel fronds, roughly chopped
- ◆ 3 lemons, sliced
- ◆ 4 bay leaves
- ◆ 2 TBS. black peppercorns, crushed
- ◆ 2 carrots, roughly chopped
- ◆ 1 onion, thinly sliced
- ◆ 2 c. of Jordan chardonnay

Have a large ice bath at the ready. In a stockpot, combine all aromatics, chardonnay and water. Bring to a full boil. Carefully grasp crabs by the back legs and lower them into the boiling liquid. Cover and cook for 14 minutes, remove and chill in ice bath.

Separate the top shell or carapace— it comes off easily— then discard the gills and mouthparts before removing the abdominal flap at the rear. Reserve the crab butter— it makes for a great spread over sourdough crostini (Cognac and sel gris wouldn't hurt). Split the crabs in two and crack with a mallet or the flat side of a heavy cleaver. Carefully pick and enjoy!

DUNGENESS CRAB BUTTER { YIELDS: 1 CUP }

- ◆ ½ c. butter
- ◆ 2 TBS. Old Bay seasoning
- ◆ 1 tsp. ancho chili powder
- ◆ 1 clove of elephant garlic, finely sliced
- ◆ 2 shallots, finely sliced
- ◆ zest of one orange
- ◆ 4 sprigs of lemon thyme
- ◆ ½ c. of Jordan chardonnay

In a saucepan, combine butter, old bay, ancho, garlic, shallots, orange zest and thyme. Simmer over medium heat for 10 minutes. Add the chardonnay and continue to simmer for five minutes.



ON THE SIDE: Chef Knoll recommends serving a salad of romaine lettuce to accompany the crab. The fresh crunch is refreshing and cuts through the richness of the butter. Also, make sure there is a basket of warm sourdough bread on the table. It is a must at any Northern-California-style crab feast.

IN YOUR GLASS Todd and Nitsa like to drink an array of wines with their crab. Try a lightly oaked chardonnay, a crisp sauvignon blanc or a bottle of bubbles to round out the experience.