

# CODEX ALIMENTARIUS

INTERNATIONAL FOOD STANDARDS



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of  
the United Nations



World Health  
Organization

E-mail: [codex@fao.org](mailto:codex@fao.org) - [www.codexalimentarius.org](http://www.codexalimentarius.org)

---

## STANDARD FOR CANNED CRAB MEAT

CXS 90-1981

Adopted in 1981. Revised in 1995. Amended in 2011, 2013, 2016, 2018 and 2024.

**2024 Amendments**

Following decisions taken at the Forty-seventh Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in November 2024, Section 6.2 Labelling of non-retail containers was added to include a reference to the *General standard for the labelling of non-retail containers of foods* (CXS 346-2021); and Section 7 Sampling, examination and analysis was amended by replacing methods of analysis and numeric performance criteria with a reference to the *Recommended methods of analysis and sampling* (CXS 234-1999).

## 1. SCOPE

This standard applies to canned crab meat. It does not apply to specialty products where crab meat constitutes less than 50 percent m/m of the contents.

## 2. DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Product definition

Canned crab meat is prepared singly or in combination from the leg, claw, body and shoulder meat from which the shell has been removed, of any of the edible species of the suborder *Brachyura* of the order Decapoda and all species of the family Lithodidae.

### 2.2 Process definition

Canned crab meat is packed in hermetically-sealed containers and shall have received a processing treatment sufficient to ensure commercial sterility.

### 2.3 Presentation

Any presentation of the product shall be permitted provided that it:

- meets all requirements of this standard; and
- is adequately described on the label to avoid confusing or misleading the consumer.

## 3. ESSENTIAL COMPOSITION AND QUALITY FACTORS

### 3.1 Crab meat

Canned crab meat shall be prepared from sound crab of the species designated in Section 2.1 which are alive immediately prior to the commencement of processing and of a quality suitable for human consumption.

### 3.2 Other ingredients

The packing medium and all other ingredients used shall be of food-grade quality and conform to all applicable Codex standards.

### 3.3 Final product

Products shall meet the requirements of this standard when lots examined in accordance with Section 9 comply with provisions set out in Section 8. Products shall be examined by the methods given in Section 7.

## 4. FOOD ADDITIVES

Acidity regulators and sequestrants used in accordance with Table 1 and Table 2 of the *General standard for food additives* (CXS 192-1995)<sup>1</sup> in food category 09.4 (Fully preserved, including canned or fermented fish and fish products, including molluscs, crustaceans, and echinoderms) and only certain Table 3 acidity regulators and flavour enhancers as indicated in Table 3 of the *General standard for food additives* are acceptable for use in foods conforming to this standard.

## 5. HYGIENE

It is recommended that the products covered by the provisions of this standard be prepared and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the *General principles of food hygiene* (CXC 1-1969),<sup>2</sup> the *Code of practice for fish and fishery products* (CXC 52-2003),<sup>3</sup> the *Code of hygienic practice for low-acid and acidified low-acid canned foods* (CXC 23-1979)<sup>4</sup> and other relevant Codex codes of hygienic practice and codes of practice.

The products should comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the *Principles and guidelines for the establishment and application of microbiological criteria for foods* (CXG 21-1997).<sup>5</sup>

## 6. LABELLING

In addition to the provisions of the *General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods* (CXS 1-1985)<sup>6</sup> the following specific provisions apply:

### 6.1 Name of the food

The name of the product shall be "crab" or "crabmeat".

In addition, the label shall include other descriptive terms that will avoid misleading or confusing the consumer.

## 6.2 Labelling of non-retail containers

The labelling of non-retail containers should be in accordance with the *General standard for the labelling of non-retail containers of foods* (CXS 346-2021).<sup>7</sup>

## 7. SAMPLING, EXAMINATION AND ANALYSES

### 7.1 Sampling

- Sampling of lots for examination of the final product as prescribed in Section 3.3 shall be in accordance with an appropriate sampling plan with an AQL of 6.5.
- Sampling of lots for examination of net weight and drained weight where appropriate shall be carried out in accordance with an appropriate sampling plan established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

### 7.2 Examination

#### 7.2.1 Sensory and physical examination

Samples taken for sensory and physical examination shall be assessed by persons trained in such examination and in accordance the *Recommended methods of analysis and sampling* (CXS 234-1999)<sup>8</sup> and the *Guidelines for the sensory evaluation of fish and shellfish in laboratories* (CXG 31-1999).<sup>9</sup>

### 7.3 Analysis

For checking the compliance with this standard, the methods of analysis and sampling contained in CXS 234-1999 relevant to the provisions in this standard shall be used.

## 8. DEFINITION OF DEFECTIVES

A sample unit will be considered defective when it exhibits any of the properties defined below.

### 8.1 Foreign matter

The presence in the sample unit of any matter, which has not been derived from crab meat, does not pose a threat to human health, and is readily recognized without magnification or is present at a level determined by any method including magnification that indicates non-compliance with good manufacturing practices and sanitation practices.

### 8.2 Odour/Flavour

A sample unit affected by persistent and distinct objectionable odours or flavours indicative of decomposition or rancidity.

### 8.3 Texture

- excessively mushy flesh uncharacteristic of the species in the presentation; or
- excessively tough flesh uncharacteristic of the species in the presentation.

### 8.4 Discolouration

A sample unit affected by distinct discolourations indicative of decomposition or rancidity or by blue, brown, black discolourations exceeding 5 percent by weight of the drained contents, or black sulphide staining of the meat exceeding 5 percent by weight of the drained contents.

## 8.5 OBJECTIONABLE MATTER

A sample unit affected by struvite crystals – any struvite crystal greater than 5 mm in length.

## 9. LOT ACCEPTANCE

A lot shall be considered as meeting the requirements of this standard when:

- the total number of defectives as classified according to Section 8 does not exceed the acceptance number (c) of an appropriate sampling plan with an AQL of 6.5;
- the total number of sample units not meeting the form of presentation defined in Section 2.3 does not exceed the acceptance number (c) of an appropriate sampling plan with an AQL of 6.5;
- the average net weight and the average drained weight where appropriate of all sample units examined is not less than the declared weight, and provided there is no unreasonable shortage in any individual container; and
- the food additives, hygiene and labelling requirements of Sections 4, 5 and 6 are met.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> FAO and WHO. 1995. *General standard for food additives*. Codex Alimentarius Standard, No. CXS 192-1995. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>2</sup> FAO and WHO. 1969. *General principles of food hygiene*. Codex Alimentarius Code of Practice, No. CXC 1-1969. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>3</sup> FAO and WHO. 2003. *Code of practice for fish and fishery products*. Codex Alimentarius Code of Practice, No. CXC 52-2003. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>4</sup> FAO and WHO. 1979. *Code of hygienic practice for low-acid and acidified low-acid canned foods*. Codex Alimentarius Code of Practice, No. CXC 23-1979. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>5</sup> FAO and WHO. 1997. *Principles and guidelines for the establishment and application of microbiological criteria for foods*. Codex Alimentarius Guideline, No. CXG 21-1997. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>6</sup> FAO and WHO. 1985. *General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods*. Codex Alimentarius Standard, No. CXS 1-1985. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>7</sup> FAO and WHO. 2021. *General standard for the labelling of non-retail containers of foods*. Codex Alimentarius Standard, No. CXS 346-2021. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>8</sup> FAO and WHO. 1999. *Recommended methods of analysis and sampling*. Codex Alimentarius Standard, No. CXS 234-1999. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.

<sup>9</sup> FAO and WHO. 1999. *Guidelines for the sensory evaluation of fish and shellfish in laboratories*. Codex Alimentarius Guideline, No. CXG 31-1999. Codex Alimentarius Commission. Rome.