

SHE-CRAB SOUP

6 tablespoons unsalted butter	7 cups bottled clam juice
1 ½ cups finely chopped yellow onion	3 cups heavy cream
¾ cup finely chopped celery	1 ½ pounds lump crabmeat, gently picked over to remove any shell without breaking up the big pieces of crab
1 ½ cups finely chopped leeks, white part only	9 tablespoons amontillado sherry
2 bay leaves	¾ teaspoons fresh lemon juice
1 ½ sprig fresh thyme or 1 pinch of dried thyme	¾ cup crab roe, finely chopped
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper	3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh herbs such as parsley, tarragon, or chervil
3 teaspoon salt	
¾ cup uncooked converted long-grain white rice	

Heat the butter in a heavy-bottomed soup pot over medium heat. Add the onion, celery, and leeks and gently sauté, stirring occasionally, for about 15 minutes or until very soft. Add the bay leaf, thyme, cayenne pepper, salt, rice, and stock and mix well. Bring the mixture to a simmer, reduce the heat to low, and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Increase the heat to medium-high, add the cream, and bring the mixture to a boil. Immediately reduce the heat to medium and simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove the soup pot from the stove. When the soup has cooled enough to handle, remove the bay leaf and sprigs of thyme. Puree it in a food processor. Strain the soup through a fine mesh sieve, which will catch the minuscule bits of rice left from pureeing. Return the soup to the pot.

Place the pot over medium heat and add the crabmeat. Bring the soup to a boil, stirring gently to prevent scorching and being careful not to break up the lumps of crab. Stir in the sherry by the tablespoon to your taste and add the lemon juice.

In a small bowl, combine the crab roe and herbs for the garnish. Pour the soup into warm bowls, add the garnish, and serve immediately.