

FAMILY RECIPES

Great Dishes From Local Chefs | By Christina Elston



David Slay



PHOTOS BY EFREN ESPINOZA

TWO FALL TASTES ON A PLATE

David Slay grew up in restaurants. He started cooking at age 11 in the kitchen of his father's restaurant, began his first culinary apprenticeship at 17 and opened his first restaurant when he was 26. He currently owns three in California, the newest being SLAY Steak + Fish House, opened in Manhattan Beach (where he lives with his family) earlier this year.

But Slay, who grew up in St. Louis, also ate plenty of his mother's home cooking. "It was middle America. You have great meatloaf, great pork roasts, things like that," he says. "There were seven kids, so we had a full family dinner every night." He continues that tradition with his wife and kids.

The home-cook-friendly recipe he shares here offers the chance to gather some fall apples and features something chefs almost always focus on, but home cooks rarely do: two tastes on one plate. "The crab and apple blend so much together and it's a dish that we do often and that people really appreciate," Slay says. "I like to bring flavors together, whether it's the crab and the apple or a scallop and corn. Imagine someone taking a bite of something. I want them to taste two different things that are one."

Slay says the dish will absolutely appeal to kids. "The Manhattan Beach

restaurant we just opened, it was geared to be an adult restaurant," he says, but adds that because Manhattan Beach is very kid-oriented, they serve plenty of families. "Kids' palates are so different today. They're traveled. They eat in the finer restaurants."

For families cooking at home, these crab cakes are handy because they can be put together the day before and, once formed, only require a quick sauté to brown them and heat through the already-cooked crab. Slay says you can also bake them in the oven if that's more convenient. "They won't be quite as crusty, but they turn out very well," he says.

The apple slaw, on the other hand, should be made just before serving, so that it stays cold and crunchy, providing nice contrast to the crab cakes. Slay says that this is the part of the recipe you can play with. "One thing I always say about any recipe, anything can be changed to adapt to something that maybe you don't like or you don't want," he says. So, use pear or dried cranberries instead of apple if you like, or even some nuts.

"Crunchy, cold, acidic. An apple has that little bite of sourness to it, a dried cranberry has a little bit of acid to it," says Slay. What you're looking for is a taste and texture that pairs well with the crab cakes – and that will become a favorite at your family table.

CRAB CAKE WITH APPLE SLAW FROM DAVID SLAY

Serves four

Crab cake ingredients:

- ½ cup carrot, finely diced
- ½ cup celery, finely diced
- ½ cup leek, finely diced
- ½ cup white onion, finely diced
- 1 tablespoon whole-grain mustard
- 1 egg white, whipped to form stiff peaks
- 1 16-ounce can of lump crab meat
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

Apple slaw ingredients:

- 1½ cups shredded
Granny Smith apples
- ½ cup julienned carrots
- ¼ cup pomegranate seeds
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Splash of apple cider vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste

Heat the oil and butter in a large sauté pan over high heat. Sauté the celery, carrots, onions and leeks until the onions are translucent. Add the mustard and fully incorporate it with the vegetables, then transfer the to a bowl and chill until completely cooled. In large mixing bowl, combine the crab, panko and chilled vegetables and mix thoroughly. Add the egg white and gently fold in until everything is incorporated. Chill.

Just before serving, combine the apple slaw ingredients. Form the crab mixture into 3-ounce patties. Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil on medium heat in a nonstick pan and cook the crab cakes until they are browned on both sides and heated through, 2 minutes per side.

Serve each crab cake alongside a spoonful of the apple slaw.