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Dungeness crab for the Super Bowl? Fresh crab for your Valentine's Day Sweetheart? Enjoy!

A recent Dungeness crab closure in Oregon of about 65 miles of coastline has disrupted the commercial crab fishery but consumers can be confident Dungeness crab on the market is safe.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife closed the area between the Coos Bay north jetty and Heceta Head, north of Florence, to recreational and commercial crabbing this week. The agencies closed the area due to one Dungeness crab that had an elevated level of domoic acid, a naturally occurring toxin, in the crab viscera, or guts. Both agencies made it clear that Dungeness crab meat – body meat and legs – is safe to eat.

"It's smart to be conservative in this situation," West Coast Seafood Processors Association Executive Director Lori Steele said. "We appreciate the state of Oregon taking measures to ensure the public's health."

At the same time, we understand changes to the commercial fishery may create some confusion with customers, but there is nothing to fear. Domoic acid is a naturally-occurring toxin and isn't unusual in the ocean environment. It usually dissipates over time. State testing ensures the crab is safe for seafood lovers. Oregon crabbers and processors routinely work closely with state managers to collect, process and ship samples for testing. Elevated levels of domoic acid levels have only been found in crab viscera. Again, crab meat remains safe for consumption.

This weekend is a perfect time to enjoy fresh Dungeness! What better way to enjoy the Super Bowl than by snacking on fresh Dungeness crab? It tastes great alone, in a dip, on a salad, just about any way you can imagine. If you're looking for recipe ideas, check out <http://oregondungeness.org/all-recipes/>. Plenty of crab is available and seasons remain open in the rest of Oregon, in Washington and California – visit your local market and ask for fresh Dungeness crab.

Don't forget Valentine's Day! It's right around the corner and Dungeness crab makes an ideal dinner for you and your sweetheart. You'll fall in love with it as much as we have.

"Ongoing, rigorous testing, combined with continued cooperation between the seafood industry and state agencies, should provide consumers with confidence that any Dungeness crab on the market is safe to eat and of the highest quality," Steele said. "The public deserves the best and that's what consumers will get: the best Oregon Dungeness crab."

For more information, contact the WCSPA at 503-227-5076