CONCOCTIONS / SIMPLE SEAFOOD

Salt-Bed Prawns with Lemon-Chive Butter



2 mains or 4 appetizers · Whole shell-on weight
Prep 15 min · Cook 8–12 min · Plate 2 min
Total 25–29 min; overnight thawing additional

A simple salt-bed technique keeps prawns off direct pan contact. Peel at the table and dip the sweet tail meat in a little lemon-chive butter.

PRAWNS & SALT BED

- 2 lb (907 g) raw large whole head-on, shell-on prawns, thawed if frozen
- 3 cups coarse food-grade rock salt, divided; enough for two ¼-inch (6 mm) beds

LEMON-CHIVE DIPPING BUTTER

- 4 tbsp (57 g) unsalted butter
- 1 lemon: 1 tsp finely grated zest, 2 tsp juice, remainder cut into wedges
- 1 tbsp finely snipped fresh chives (about 3 g)

EQUIPMENT. Two cold 12-inch stainless-steel frying pans on two burners; small saucepan; fine-tip food thermometer; separate raw and cooked tongs; clean platter and dipping bowl.

METHOD

1. Clean finish. Wash hands. Rinse/dry lemon and chives. Take 1 tsp zest and 2 tsp juice; cut remaining lemon into wedges. Snip 1 tbsp chives. Put butter in small saucepan. Keep finish, bowl and platter away from raw-prawn tools.

2. Cold setup. Keep prawns cold until needed; pat dry, heads/shells on. Use cleaned/deveined prawns or slit shell backs shallowly and lift out dark veins; do not peel. Divide salt between two cold, dry 12-inch stainless pans for level ¼-inch (6 mm) beds. Set half the prawns on their sides in each, one uncrowded layer. Wash hands; clean/sanitize raw-contact surfaces. Separate cooked-food tongs.

3. Cook & melt. Put both pans over medium heat together; no preheat, water or oil. Estimate 5–7 min first side, then turn with raw-contact tongs for 3–5 min more. Coral shells/opaque flesh are cues, not proof. Meanwhile melt butter on low 2–3 min; off heat stir in all zest, juice and chives with clean spoon. Pour into clean dipping bowl.

4. Check tails. Before removal, check several largest tails per pan with a fine-tip thermometer: insert sideways between shell plates into thick flesh; sensing tip in flesh, away from shell, hot salt/pan. Require 145°F (63°C); cook longer/recheck if below. Clean probe after low/raw checks. Estimated 8–12 min includes heat from cold, not a safety guarantee. [3]

5. Serve. Clean tongs: lift to clean platter, shaking/brushing off loose salt. Serve at once with butter and all wedges; peel to eat. No extra salt. Rest hot pans on heatproof surfaces. Cool pans/salt fully; discard used salt, never reuse as seasoning. Salt/shells do not preserve seafood.

KEEP COLD. Raw: thaw covered/leakproof in fridge, never on counter; cook within 2 days of purchase/thawing or earlier expiry (thawing never extends an earlier deadline). Keep at 40°F (4°C) or below. Leftovers: refrigerate prawns/butter promptly in separate shallow covered containers; no room-temperature wait. Use within 3 days of preparation/earlier expiry: conservative household cap, not validated shelf life. Discard after over 2 hr cumulative time out, or 1 hr above 90°F (32°C). [3][4]

REHEAT & LABELS. Microwave a portion covered, rearranging and following standing time, to 165°F (74°C); check several thick tails as above, clean probe after low readings. Heat leftover butter separately to 165°F, stirring/probing away from bowl; do not mix with fresh. Texture firms. Contains crustacean shellfish and milk; check labels/cross-contact. Serving/time estimates; two burners required. [4]

Original adaptation, not kitchen-tested; AI-generated serving illustration, not a prepared-batch photograph.

Inspired by Fallow Chefs' public caption [1] and article [2], crediting Nieves Barragán's salt-bed technique. Home quantities, two-pan timing and lemon-chive butter are our development.

[1] Fallow reel · [2] Fallow article · [3] FDA seafood · [4] USDA leftovers