the Lexingtonienne

MIKE'S REALLY AWESOME CRAB CAKES

- 2 shallots, finely chopped

- 1 small red bell pepper, finely chopped

- 1/2 jalapeno, finely chopped (no seeds please)

- 2 cloves garlic, minced

- 1 pound jumbo lump crab meat

- 1/4 stick of cream cheese, slightly softened for easier mixing

- 1 1/2 t Dijon mustard

- 2 T mayonnaise

- 1 egg

- 1 C plus 2 handfuls panko crumbs combined with:

- 2 T Old Bay seasoning, plus additional for sprinkling

First, a note. If you happen upon some really great crabmeat, use a little less of everything else in order to let the crab enjoy the spotlight. If you find crabmeat that is good but not amazing, feel free to add more of everything else to compensate.

Preheat oven to 425. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and grease lightly with cooking spray.

Gently pick through your crabmeat to glean out any pieces of shell. Saute shallots, peppers, and garlic until softened. Sprinkle with Old Bay seasoning. Combine crabmeat, pepper mixture, cream cheese, dijon mustard, mayonnaise, egg, and 2 handfuls of panko crumb mixture. Stir gently so as not to break up the crabmeat too much, until thoroughly mixed. Shape into cakes, then roll in remaining panko mixture.

Place crab cakes onto baking sheet. Your baking time will vary based on the size of your crab cakes. We did fairly large ones and made only 6 total. We baked ours for about 15-20 minutes, then turned them and baked for another 10 minutes or so, until both sides were browned. (P.S. This is a great way to do mini crab cakes to serve as an hors d'oeuvre. Much easier than pan frying all the tiny ones!)

I like to serve my crab cakes with dipping sauce. You can always buy pre-made tartar sauce, or you can buy or make cocktail sauce. I also like to really class things up with some Thousand Island dressing. If you don't have any on hand, mix up some mayonnaise, ketchup, dijon mustard, sweet pickle relish, and -- no joke -- whatever condiments you have in your fridge and feel like using. It always makes a fabulous sauce that, hilariously enough, your guests will think is *fancy*.