Prep Time: 20 minutes
Cook Time: 40 minutes
Total Time: 1 hour
Difficulty: Intermediate
Cuisine: American / Coastal

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Ingredients

For the Bisque Base:

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely diced (about 1 cup)
- 2 celery stalks, finely diced (about ½ cup)
- 3 garlic cloves, minced

- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 4 cups seafood stock (or chicken stock)
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons dry sherry (optional but recommended)
- 1 teaspoon Old Bay seasoning
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper (adjust to taste)
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt (plus more to taste)
- ½ teaspoon black pepper

For the Seafood:

- 12 oz raw medium shrimp, peeled and deveined (tails removed), chopped into bite-size pieces
- 8 oz lump crabmeat, picked over for shells (jumbo lump or backfin)
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives (for garnish)

Optional Garnish:

- Extra sherry drizzle
- A pat of butter
- Oyster crackers or crusty bread

Equipment

- Large heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven (5–6 quart)
- Wooden spoon or silicone spatula
- Whisk
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Ladle
- Immersion blender (optional, for a silkier texture)

Instructions

Step 1: Sauté the Aromatics (Medium Heat — 5–6 minutes)

Melt the butter in a large pot over medium heat (about 350°F / 175°C). Add the diced onion

and celery and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and translucent, 5–6 minutes. Add the minced garlic and cook 30 seconds until fragrant — do not brown.

Intensity note: Keep the heat at a steady medium. If the vegetables begin to brown, reduce the heat slightly; you want a gentle sweat, not a sear.

Step 2: Build the Roux (Medium-Low Heat — 2–3 minutes)

Sprinkle the flour over the vegetables and stir constantly for 2–3 minutes to cook out the raw flour taste. The mixture should look like a loose paste. Stir in the tomato paste and cook 1 minute more, until it darkens slightly.

Step 3: Deglaze and Simmer (Medium-High, then Low — 15 minutes)

Pour in the sherry and stir, scraping up any browned bits, 30 seconds. Gradually whisk in the seafood stock in a steady stream to avoid lumps. Add the Old Bay, smoked paprika, cayenne, bay leaf, salt, and pepper. Bring to a gentle boil over medium-high heat, then reduce to low, cover partially, and simmer 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened.

Intensity note: A bare simmer — small bubbles around the edges — is ideal. A rolling boil can make the bisque grainy.

Step 4: Blend for Silkiness (Optional — 1–2 minutes)

Remove the bay leaf. For a smoother bisque, blend about half the soup with an immersion blender (or transfer 2 cups to a stand blender, blend, and return). Alternatively, leave it rustic and chunky. Return to low heat.

Step 5: Add the Cream (Low Heat — 5 minutes)

Stir in the whole milk and heavy cream. Warm gently 5 minutes — do not boil once the dairy is added, or it may curdle. Taste and adjust salt and cayenne.

Step 6: Poach the Shrimp (Low Heat — 3–4 minutes)

Add the chopped raw shrimp and cook at a gentle simmer (about 180–190°F / 82–88°C) for 3–4 minutes, until pink and just opaque. Stir gently.

Intensity note: Low and slow is critical here. Overcooking shrimp makes them rubbery; they should curl into a loose “C,” not a tight “O.”

Step 7: Fold in the Crab (Low Heat — 2 minutes)

Gently fold in the lump crabmeat — stir as little as possible to keep the lumps intact. Cook 2 minutes, just until heated through. Stir in the lemon juice and fresh parsley. Taste once more for seasoning.

Step 8: Rest and Serve (Off Heat — 2 minutes)

Remove from heat and let rest 2 minutes so flavors meld. Ladle into warm bowls. Garnish with chives, a tiny drizzle of sherry if desired, and a pat of butter. Serve with oyster crackers or crusty bread.

Timing & Intensity Summary

Stage	Heat Level	Time	Visual Cue
Sauté aromatics	Medium	5–6 min	Translucent, soft
Cook roux	Medium-low	2–3 min	Loose paste, no browning
Simmer base	Low (bare simmer)	15 min	Slightly thickened
Add cream	Low	5 min	Steaming, not boiling
Poach shrimp	Low (180–190°F)	3–4 min	Pink, opaque, loose curl
Heat crab	Low	2 min	Just warmed through
Rest	Off heat	2 min	Flavors meld

Total active time: ~35 minutes | Total time: ~1 hour

Nutrition Information (per serving, 6 servings)

Estimates based on standard ingredient values; brands and portion sizes will vary.

- Calories: 385 kcal
- Total Fat: 26 g (Saturated Fat: 15 g)
- Cholesterol: 175 mg
- Sodium: 780 mg
- Total Carbohydrates: 13 g (Dietary Fiber: 1 g; Sugars: 5 g)
- Protein: 24 g
- Vitamin D: 8% DV
- Calcium: 14% DV
- Iron: 10% DV
- Potassium: 420 mg