

Louisiana Conservationist » Silverfin: Carp has a Makeover

<http://louisianaconservationist.org/silverfin-carp-has-a-makeover/>

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story by Adam Einck

“When life gives you lemons, make lemonade,” is a well-known expression used to turn a less than desirable situation into a beneficial outcome. This expression is also at the heart of Louisiana cuisine as Cajun and Creole cooking was born from taking cheaper and plentiful local products and making delicious meals for families and friends.

This phrase also applies to a part of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) management plan for silver and bighead carp. The department is encouraging to get recreational anglers and commercial fishermen to make silver and bighead carp keepers. So the next time life gives you a 20-pound silver or bighead carp, LDWF wants fishermen and boaters to make fried fish, fish cakes or fish gumbo.

As part of a strategy to help manage the non-native silver and bighead carp, LDWF and Chef Philippe Parola produced the “Silverfin Promotion” that will strive to create a commercial and recreational market for these invasive species.

To help create a demand for the white, delicious meat these fish possess, LDWF has proposed changing the name of silver and bighead carp meat to “Silverfin” for marketing and packaging purposes.

“After sampling the fish for its taste appeal and meeting with Chef Philippe, both LDWF and the chef decided to change the name from silver and bighead carp to the more appetizing Silverfin,” said LDWF Inland Fisheries Administrator Gary Tilyou. “The biggest obstacle to market this fish was getting past the negative connotation that the word carp brings. Once people taste the fish for themselves they will soon realize that Silverfin belongs on the table. On top of tasting good, Silverfin are also rich in omega 3.”

At the “Silverfin Promotion” announcement on Jan. 12 in Baton Rouge Chef Philippe Parola and Darryl Rivere of A la Carte Foods prepared Silverfin recipes for everyone attending with mostly positive feedback from the media and seafood industry representatives.

Chef Parola also went to the National Grocers Association 2010 Annual Convention & Supermarket Synergy Showcase in Las Vegas from Feb. 9-12 to promote Silverfin to food retailers and wholesalers. At the show, Chef Parola handed out Silverfin brochures and conducted live cooking shows of Silverfin recipes for leaders and decision makers within the food industry.

“We want as many people to try these fish as possible. Silverfin is a cross between scallops and crabmeat as it is very white and one of the most pleasant tastes that I have encountered throughout my career as a chef,” said Chef Parola. “So far every professional chef I have introduced Silverfin to has produced the same conclusion.”

After researching many de-boning systems, Parola chose to use a steaming method, which makes it easier to remove the bones after the fish is cooked. Parola has already developed prepackaged Silverfin fish cakes, gumbo and imitation crabmeat stuffing to be distributed by A la Carte Foods in

Pierre Parte for Rouses Supermarkets, a local south Louisiana grocery chain.

"If a large market can be developed for these fish, we may be able to control their numbers before major impacts to native fish occur," said Tilyou. "A large Silverfin market will also increase the income of commercial fishermen who often discard the fish because they are unable to sell them."

For the recreational market, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission adopted a notice of intent at their Jan. 7 meeting that would relax the regulations on silver and bighead carp after a 120-day public comment period.

These fish are not susceptible to traditional angling methods because they feed on plankton, so the notice of intent would allow fishermen to take silver and bighead carp using dip nets, spears and snagging methods. Additionally, since silver carp can jump several feet out of the water and into boats, fishermen would be able to use their boats as a legal catching method. Neither fish currently has a size or possession limit.

When caught recreationally, anglers should bleed the fish while alive by cutting off the tail and then place under ice to avoid any grey color and aftertaste. A video series produced by the U.S. Geological Survey and LSU AgCenter on how to clean the fish properly can be found at www.wlf.louisiana.gov/silverfin.

Silver and bighead carp were introduced into the United States in the 1970s to help manage aquaculture ponds and wastewater lagoons. They quickly escaped into the wild and eventually descended into Louisiana waters from the north in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Silver and bighead carp are commonly found in Louisiana in the Mississippi, Red and Ouachita rivers and Atchafalaya Basin.

It is the silver carp, most recognized for its jumping ability, which can leap several feet out of the water when disturbed by boat propellers. Silver carp can grow up to 50 pounds, posing a threat to boaters and their equipment. A silver carp jumping out of the water can result in injury to the operator and damage to the boat, or in the most extreme cases, death to the boater.

"These carp have been in Louisiana waters for close to 20 years and are sustaining their populations," said LDWF Inland Fisheries Administrator Gary Tilyou. "This is a problem we have to manage to minimize impacts to our natural resources and the people that enjoy our Louisiana waterways."

Both silver and bighead carp pose a threat to the Louisiana freshwater fishery by out competing local fish for food. Both of these carp species primarily feed on plankton, which is also the main diet for shad, bigmouth buffalo and paddlefish. Plankton is also the primary food of the larval stages of catfish, bass and other freshwater species.

"We will never be able to fully eradicate these fish, so we are trying to make the best out of what these fish have to offer," said Tilyou. "By creating a demand for the meat, we hope to create a commercial and recreational freshwater fishing industry for silver and bighead carp."

For more details about the Silverfin promotion, visit www.wlf.louisiana.gov/silverfin.



SILVERFIN CAKES (4 servings)

Ingredients:

1 pound of silverfin white meat
4 ounces of melted, unsalted butter
1 tablespoon of Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon of lemon juice
1 egg
1 ounce of bread crumbs
Seasoning and hot sauce to taste

Directions:

Poach or steam silverfin meat until fully cooked. Break fish into pieces to remove bones. Place all the meat into a mixing bowl and add butter, mustard, egg and lemon juice. Mix well. Add bread crumbs. Season to taste. Make into small cakes. Roll into egg wash and seasoned flour then fry.



SILVERFIN WITH FRESH BERRIES (4 servings)

Ingredients:

4 silverfin filets
2 ounces of each: raspberries, blueberries, strawberries and grapes of your choice.
2 tablespoons of pecan oil
2 ounces of unsalted butter
2 tablespoons of Kleinpeter cream
3 ounces of white wine
1 lemon
1 orange
Seasoning to taste

Directions:

In a sauté skillet preheat oil and butter until very hot. Place seasoned silverfin in skillet and brown both sides. Add white wine and juice from lemon and orange. Bring to a boil. Then add berries and boil for 3 minutes over medium to high heat.



SILVERFIN ALMONDINE (4 servings)

Ingredients:

4 filets of silverfin fish
2 tablespoons of olive oil
2 ounces of unsalted butter
3 ounces of white wine
1 tablespoon of lemon juice
½ cup of roasted almonds

Seasoning to taste

Directions:

Season silverfin to taste. In a sauté skillet, preheat olive oil and butter until very hot. Place seasoned silverfin filets in skillet and brown both sides. Add white wine and lemon juice and cook over medium to high heat for 5 minutes or until done. Top silverfin filets with sauce and roasted almonds.



SILVERFIN FRIED STRIPS (4 servings)

Ingredients:

16 strips of silverfin fish (boneless if possible)
2 eggs
1 cup of Kleinpeter half & half for egg wash
1 cup of Louisiana Fish Fry seasoned flour
Pickapeppa mango sauce for dipping

Directions:

Preheat fryer to 350 degrees. In a bowl, crack 2 eggs. Stir well, and then add half & half. Stir. This will be the egg wash for your fish.

Place the silverfin strips into the egg wash and then coat each strip with the seasoned flour. Fry until done. Serve with Pickapeppa mango sauce.