

Chef Hopes To Make Carp A Popular Dish

January 8, 2010

text size **A A A**

Web Resources

Techniques to cook Asian carp

Recipes for silverfin carp

Asian carp may be a problem in the Great Lakes, but in Louisiana they are renaming it silver fin and promoting it as a delicacy. Chef Philippe Parola says the Asian carp's texture is a cross between scallop and crabmeat, adding its bones can be removed easily by steaming.

Copyright © 2010 National Public Radio®. For personal, noncommercial use only. See Terms of Use. For other uses, prior permission required.

MELISSA BLOCK, host:

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has one approach to the carp conundrum: If you can't beat them, eat them. Next week, the state is in fact launching a campaign celebrating the gastro potential of the carp and giving it a new name, the silver fin. But how do you eat them?

Well, that's where our next guest comes in handy. Chef Philippe Parola is working with the state to help people figure out how to cook the carp. And he joins us from Baton Rouge. Chef Parola, what does carp taste like? How would you describe it?

Mr. PHILIPPE PAROLA (Chef): Well, number one, carp is kind of misleading on that name because the carp that we know in Louisiana, the common carp, they are bottom feeder, and they taste good, but not as good as the silver carp, which we tried to rename it as a silver fin.

BLOCK: The silver fin, yeah.

Mr. PAROLA: Absolutely. The meat texture of it is it's a cross between scallops and crab meat. That's how good it is.

BLOCK: Now, the bones, though, I think are a problem. These are big fish with lots of bones. What do you about that?

Mr. PAROLA: But it - absolutely, it's a lot of bones. And the first thing first is about bleeding the fish. That fish has to be bled. It helps to get the meat really white. And secondly, on the bone, I found that if you steam the fish, you can remove the bones very easily. And then you take the end product of the steamed meat and do all kind of different things such as fish cake, and fish spread, and soups and so on. I mean, you know, we're known in Louisiana for good cooking, and a gumbo pot, you know, you can put literally almost anything there and it will taste good.

BLOCK: And these are big fish. So you're getting a big fillet out of this fish, I would guess.

Mr. PAROLA: Well, actually, believe it or not, this is one of the very few fish, the bigger it gets, the better it is, because the bones are bigger, you can remove them, but the fish quality of it stays the same.

BLOCK: I understand that you have had carp land in your boat. Is that right? They jump out of the

water and you've had them land right in there?

Mr. PAROLA: Absolutely. Yeah. Well, actually, all this started last August. I was doing a little work with Jeff Corwin from the Animal Planet, and he had a, you know, cooking show on the Food Network called "Extreme Cuisine," and he asked me to get an exotic fish out of Louisiana. So we went and got an alligator gar. And while I was riding a boat to catch an alligator gar, literally 40 minutes from New Orleans, these two giant carp just jumped in my boat and landed on my feet. Then I took this fish back to the restaurant, try them out.

BLOCK: So you're on this campaign. This is your mission, how to turn this nuisance fish into a delicacy.

Mr. PAROLA: Yeah, absolutely. It is an invasive species, but it's domestic now. We have it.

BLOCK: And if I were to come to you today, Chef Parola, come into your kitchen and say, okay, convince me about this carp, this silver fin, make me something amazing, what would you cook for me? What would you serve?

Mr. PAROLA: All right, well, I will tell you what: How long will it take to fry a fish nugget - three minutes?

NORRIS: I guess.

Mr. PAROLA: That's how long it will take to convince you. As soon as you're going to break that piece of fried fish, just fry it, that's it. And don't have to make a fancy sauce or anything else, it's that good. You don't have to cover it up with anything. You'll break it up, you'll taste it and just, wow.

BLOCK: Chef Parola, thanks for talking with us.

Mr. PAROLA: No problem, thank you and bon appetit.

BLOCK: Chef Philippe Parola, he's helping Louisiana create a demand to eat the invasive Asian carp, otherwise known as the silver fin.

Copyright © 2010 National Public Radio®. All rights reserved. No quotes from the materials contained herein may be used in any media without attribution to National Public Radio. This transcript is provided for personal, noncommercial use only, pursuant to our Terms of Use. Any other use requires NPR's prior permission. Visit our permissions page for further information.

NPR transcripts are created on a rush deadline by a contractor for NPR, and accuracy and availability may vary. This text may not be in its final form and may be updated or revised in the future. Please be aware that the authoritative record of NPR's programming is the audio.