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Louisiana Rolls Out "Silverfin Promotion" for Carp



The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) with Chef Philippe Parola today announced the "Silverfin Promotion" that will strive to create a commercial and recreational market for the non-native bighead and silver carp.

Included in LDWF's plan for silver and bighead carp is creating 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 announcement Chef Philippe Parola, Chef Cullen Lord of Flemmings Restaurant and Darryl Rivere of A la Carte Foods prepared Silverfin recipes for everyone attending.

"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 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.

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. 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 by cutting off the tail while alive 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 Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (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.

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