



Silver(fin) lining: Renown chef in Alton with carp solution

By [FRED POLLARD](#)

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ALTON - Renown French chef Philippe Parola will be in Alton on Saturday, serving up fish for the "It's Our River Day" at Riverfront Park.

"I am encouraging the local area to participate in my Asian Carp Invasion Solution," Parola said.

During the Fourth Annual Mississippi Earthtones Festival, Parola, president and CEO of Chef Parola Enterprises, will be demonstrating how to prepare the Asian carp as a delicacy and handing out samples and recipes.

Geo and Laurie Raftopoulos of Chez Marilyn will be on hand, providing the turkey fryers, oil, spices and assistance to Chef Parola.

"This is exciting, and we are really looking forward to it," Laurie Raftopoulos said. "Chef Parola is an interesting man, and I think people will really enjoy him and his cooking."

The French, Italian and Louisiana continental cuisine chef has opened several restaurants, both in the U.S. and overseas.

"We are fortunate to have him this weekend," Ben Allen, one of the founding members of Grafton Summit Enterprises LLC, said. "What he does with this fish is amazing."

For the last several years, the Grafton area has been trying to decide how to deal with the problem of Asian carp filling the fishing boats. Grafton Summit Enterprises is attempting to bring their plan to open a local plant to market the fish to the public's attention.

"This is killing the fishing industry in Illinois," Allen said. "Ten years ago, we could go out and pull in 10,000 pounds of fish; of that, we would have a mixture of catfish and buffalo. Now, we can still bring in 10,000 pounds, but 80 percent of it will be the silverfins."

Parola has joined a growing number of concerned hopefuls who are wanting to bring about a permanent name change from "Asian carp" to the more taste bud-tantalizing "silverfins," sell the idea that it actually is both tender and tasty, and build processing plants to market and sell the fish.

Many see Parola, and the rest of the visionaries looking to turn the problem into a delicacy, as their "knights in shining aprons."

"Now that people are starting to realize this fish is a delicacy all over the world, we need to take advantage of it," Laurie Raftopoulos said. "If this could happen, it would be a great thing for this area and create many much-needed jobs."

Parola will begin cooking and serving silverfins caught by volunteers from the Sierra Club at 4 p.m.

The theme of this year's festival is "It's Our River Day" and will focus on conservation ideas and Earth-friendly products and practices. Presented by Alton Marketplace, the Sierra Club and the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center, the festival begins at noon and winds down around 9 p.m. Children's

activities, wildlife interaction, diving dogs, three art contests, food and beer booths, and a catfish tournament run throughout the day.

A "River Cleanup" activity will take place from 9 a.m. until noon, including a free lunch and a boat ride with Missouri River Relief and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. Registration is required for the cleanup event.

For more information on volunteering or attending the festival, visit the website at www.riverfrontamphitheater.com/Earthtones.

For more information on Chef Parola, visit his website at www.chefphilippe.com.

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