

# State touts fishing for silverfin

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Program's goal seeks to control carp

- By [TOMMY C. SIMMONS](#)

- Advocate Food writer
- Published: Jan 13, 2010 - Page: 7A
- The Advocate's Food section on Jan. 21 will feature recipes and tips for cooking silverfin.

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The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries on Tuesday kicked off a marketing campaign to tempt chefs and consumers to try two species of Asian carp that have invaded the state's waterways.

Silverfin is the name the department's marketing department selected to identify the two species of the invasive Asian carp: silver and bighead.

The Asian carp were first introduced to Louisiana waterways in the early 1970s to aid in controlling plant and plankton growth in aquaculture ponds and sewage treatment lagoon systems, said Gary Tilyou, LDWF inland fisheries administrator. The carp escaped to the wild and rapidly multiplied.

Within a few years, Asian carp were displacing native fish and contributing to boating accidents because the silver carp, particularly, are jumpers.

"Whenever you have 60-pound fish jumping in boats, you have a problem," Tilyou said.

In the upper Midwest, the fisheries agencies have been trying to eradicate Asian carp, Tilyou said. "Our experience with eradication is it doesn't work. We think managing the fishery, creating a financial incentive for harvesting the fish is a far more effective control."

The freshwater fish are filter feeders, which means the fish flesh never develops the off flavor present in some wild-caught fish species, said Glenn Thomas with the LSU AgCenter.

During Tuesday's silverfin launch at the state Wildlife and Fisheries headquarters, Tilyou and Darrel Rivere, owner of A la Carte Foods, served silverfin prepared in various ways: fried, broiled, gumbo, bisque, fish cakes, jerky and fish dip.

Jerald Horst, co-author of "The Louisiana Seafood Bible: Shrimp" and a retired fisheries agent from the LSU AgCenter, said he wasn't surprised with how tasty the silverfin dishes were. "It's a white meat fish with a mild taste ... with the nationwide interest in eating sustainable seafood, chefs will like the fact that silverfin are abundant, locally harvested and economical," he said.

Chef Philippe Parola, who is leading LDWF's research on how to develop a commercial market for silverfin, described the flavor as "a cross between scallops and crabmeat."

Silverfin are being promoted to two target groups: recreational fishers and food service/consumers. LDWF is distributing information to recreational fishers on how to handle silverfin when caught. It's important to bleed the fish and chill it immediately. The LSU AgCenter has developed two techniques for deboning silverfin. In the past, Tilyou noted, the problem of the silverfin having so many bones discouraged recreational fishers from cleaning the fish.

Chefs and restaurateurs should be able to start buying boneless silverfin fish flakes, which resemble lump

crabmeat, within a month. Parola said Rouse's Supermarket chain should have silverfin products for sale within three to four weeks.

Details on how to fillet the fish are posted online at <http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/silverfin>.

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