

NEWS »

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SCUTTLEBUTT: LOUISIANA NEWS BRIEFS



## Chef Philippe Parola's Silverfin Campaign

Using a marketing plan developed by the state, a group of Louisiana-based seafood companies announced a joint venture last week that will put the recently branded silverfin on retail shelves within a month. Technically, the fish is Asian carp. Silverfin is the name it has been given in a marketing plan developed by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, which is promoting recreational and commercial applications. Chef **Philippe Parola** of Baton Rouge, CEO of Chef Parola Enterprises and Partran LLC, kick-started the campaign last fall. "We have the whole game plan ready to go," Parola says.

The state recently approved preliminary rules for harvesting silverfin, and months ago food scientists, state biologists and federal agencies developed ways to clean and process the fish. Parola, along with Chef **Cullen Lord** of Fleming's Restaurant and **Darryl Rivere** of A la Carte Food, stepped in with recipes like silverfin cakes and silverfin amandine. Rivere Foods of Paincourtville has signed on as the lead processor, New Orleans Fish House will distribute the frozen products and Rouse's Supermarket is the first official buyer. On the horizon, Parola will attend the National Grocers Association Convention in Las Vegas to pitch its 1,500 members. What about taste? Parola told a group of reporters, elected officials and seafood-industry types last week that it's a cross between scallops and crab meat. "This has a great taste," he says. "Consumers will love it."

For state officials, creating a market for silverfin is a biological win as well. It's a relatively new species that competes with other fish for food and poses a risk to boaters because it weighs up to 30 pounds and can jump out of the water. Moreover, eradication of the invasive species is virtually impossible. "This is being done without

any taxpayer dollars," Parola adds. Culinary adventures are nothing new to Parola. In the early 1980s, he was among the chefs leading the way in cooking alligator meat and backed the effort for softshell crawfish as well. Parola may be best known as the man who attempted to sell the nation on nutria meat a few years back. The campaign for silverfin is "dramatically different," he says, because the media will have a harder time portraying a fish as an overgrown rat. "If we can't do something with silverfin, we are clowns," he says. "It's too good to ship to Asia, it's too good to use as bait and it's too good to leave on the bank." — *Jeremy Alford*