



March 25, 2010

Shark fin soup targeted by Chinese-Canadians

CBC News

A Vancouver group is targeting soon-to-be-married Chinese-Canadian couples to get shark fin soup off the menu at their wedding banquets and help save the endangered creatures.

A Vancouver group is targeting soon-to-be-married Chinese-Canadian couples to get shark fin soup off the menu at their wedding banquets and help save the endangered creatures.

Shark fin soup is an expensive delicacy which is traditionally served at Chinese wedding banquets to show that the groom's family is wealthy and respectful.

But to supply the worldwide demand, some sharks are being hunted to the brink of extinction. More than 38 million sharks are killed each year just for their fins, according to Nickolas Dulvy, an expert in marine biodiversity and conservation at Simon Fraser University.

"They just cannot reproduce fast enough to replace the numbers that are being killed routinely, daily by fisheries around the world," said Dulvy.

"Happy hearts love sharks"

That's why a Vancouver group of Chinese-Canadians called Shark Truth has launched a special campaign targeting their community's attitude toward the traditional dish.

Claudia Li, the founder of Shark Truth, said they hope to use the young couples to change the older attitudes about the dish by running a contest with the slogan "Happy hearts love sharks."

If a Vancouver-area couple serves an alternative to shark fin soup at their wedding, they could win a trip to Mexico - and a chance to dive with friendly nurse sharks.

While it may be hard to convince people not to eat it when the soup is in front of them, by targeting the couples that might otherwise serve it at their weddings it educates and creates change, said Li.

"[We're] using them to get to the message through their family and their parents, so we don't have to battle each family," said Li.

The organizers said it's a positive approach that might work where others have failed.

Others, such as the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, have used graphic images to drive their message home, but those have been seen as too preachy and lacking understanding about the deep cultural ties to the delicacy, said Li.

Time for change

Prominent Vancouver food writer Stephanie Yuen agrees, and has signed on to the campaign.

"I think it's very important to educate the Chinese community about shark fins," said Yuen.

"It's about time the Chinese do something to protect the environment, not their stomach," she said.

So far, Shark Truth has also managed to convince the owner of one Chinese restaurant to take the dish off the menu, and offer more ecologically friendly seafood alternatives.

But with more than 500 Chinese restaurants in the Vancouver area, many owners may need to be convinced that it makes economic as well as ecological sense to stop serving the dish.

The group has an enormous job ahead, since a single serving of shark fin soup can cost as much as \$100 per bowl.

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation



CBC News 2010. Permission granted for up to 5 copies. All rights reserved.

You may forward this article or get additional permissions by typing http://license.icopyright.net/3.8471?icx_id=/2010/03/25/bc-shark-fin-soup-campaign.html into any web browser. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and CBC logos are registered trademarks of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation . The iCopyright logo is a registered trademark of iCopyright, Inc.