

# a Chinese Canadian love affair with shark's fin...

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29 Mar



A few months back, the *UGLY Chinese Canadian* received an invite for an evening soirée with old friends and to meet up with a bright young woman who was passionate about sharks.

Yes, this young Chinese-Canadian, Ms Claudia Li, love sharks.

*Not eating* sharks, but saving sharks!

In fact, she and her friends have launched a local campaign to help save the world's sharks.



Here's Claudia's story:

## History of Shark Fin Soup

Behind every dish is an interesting tale. Through primary research, we discovered that shark fin soup began in the Sung dynasty and is a symbol of wealth and health. Shark fin soup is part of what is known as the "Big 4" dishes at a traditional banquet dinner where 5-10 dishes are commonly served.

They symbolize different things such as prosperity and include:

- Abalone [bào]
- Sea cucumber [shēn]
- Shark fin [chì]



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*Fish maw [dǔ]*

Not everyone insists on getting all four, but shark fin soup is often the most essential dish out of the “Big 4” for banquet dinners.

Shark fin soup is commonly served in two forms:

**Individual:**

Entire fin intact served in individual bowls with a bit of thick broth.

This is purchased as dish by affluent individuals, often for special occasions.

**“Big bowl” style:**

Strands of the fin are pulled apart and are mixed with strips of chicken meat, served with a condensed chicken or pork broth. This is put in a large family-style serving bowl and distributed into individual bowls, often when the big bowl reaches the table.

The majority of shark fin soup is served “big bowl” style during banquets or large dinners for birthdays, anniversaries, baby showers or business celebrations. However, shark fin soup is most notably served during wedding banquets as a sign of wealth and a demonstration of “mian zi”, or face. Traditionally, at weddings where shark fin soup is served, the groom’s side of the family pays for the wedding. There is a long-established expression that says “if there is no shark fin soup at the wedding banquet, the bride is marrying into a poor family”. This folklore has been so deeply engrained in consumers that it is seen as distasteful or cheap to not serve one’s guests shark fin soup.

Remember, trying to alter the traditions of any culture is difficult and a culturally sensitive topic. Imagine telling people they couldn’t have turkey for Thanksgiving!

According to a **CBC news** article:

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.

**Read more:** <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2010/03/25/bc-shark-fin-soup-campaign.html?ref=rss#socialcomments#ixzz0jcnGN5wT>

Claudia further writes,

Over 38 million sharks are killed each year just for their fins to make shark fin soup.

Shark fin soup is most popularly served at Chinese wedding banquets. The shark finning industry is also cruel and wasteful, and is threatening to drive this group of species to extinction. If you have friends or family in the Chinese community, forward this to them.

Tell couples getting married that they can send a powerful, positive message on their special night and get rewarded for it too!

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## 'Happy Hearts Love Sharks' Wedding Contest

Join the 'Happy Hearts Love Sharks' Wedding Contest where couples can register by sending in their photo or video pledge to Stop the Soup at their wedding banquet for a chance to win some amazing prizes\*:

### Prizes

- Trip to Mexico for 2 to swim with whale sharks - the biggest fish in the world\*\*
- A \$500 wedding photography package\*\*
- International prize: Waterproof digital camera and an adopt a shark package

Visit <http://sharktruth.com/wedding> for contest registration and more info.

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*Karen Hanegan*

May 29, 2010 at 8:22 am

Thank you for this article. It was invaluable in helping me understand the history of eating shark fin and the cultural importance it has had. These are the obstacles that are going to be difficult to overcome in stopping this practice.
- 

*laurel*

May 29, 2010 at 6:28 pm

Very interesting article , I did not know anything about this 'extinction soup'.
- 

*Claudia*

May 30, 2010 at 8:53 am

Hello friends of Shark Truth,

We've just received some amazing news from sharkies in Hawaii: the Shark Fin Bill has been signed and passed in Hawaii. This is the first law of its kind - banning the possession of shark fin - meaning that shark fin soup itself is going to be illegal in Hawaii starting July 2011.

The success of the Bill shows that with the right community support and political will, change is possible and we can really help save Harry's fins (see how happy he is?).

As for Shark Truth, we're going to continue building community support, especially from

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couples-to-be as that is where shark fin soup is most popularly served. This is our first step in tackling the issue in the Chinese community. We'll be at Vancouver's Dragon Boat Festival on June 19th-20th to outreach to our community in addition to showcasing couples from our Happy Hearts Love Sharks Wedding Contest.

Remind our couples that they are making a difference: if you haven't already [voted](#) for your favourite couple, get yours in before the contest closes on World Oceans Day, June 8th.

You've been notified of this phenomenal news because you've recently shown interest in our work and/or participated in helping in way way or another and if you have, we want thank you for all that you do.

Click [here](#) for the Associated Press news article on the Bill.

Signed with hope and excitement,  
-  
Claudia Li, BBA  
Founder & Co-Chair | Shark Truth



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