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Shark Truth seeks alternatives with Sans Fin Soup Contest in Vancouver



Shark Truth founder Claudia Li wants a national ban on shark fins and its primary use, shark-fin soup, across Canada.

Comments (2)

By Michelle da Silva, September 13, 2011

When Claudia Li started Shark Truth—a Vancouver-based nonprofit group with the goal to stop the consumption of shark-fin soup by raising awareness of its alternatives—not even her parents thought she would be successful.

"My mom and dad were like, 'You're crazy. There's no way you can change anybody's mind'," Li told the *Georgia Straight* by phone during a trip to Toronto. "I had really low expectations for my family, because usually your family and friends are the hardest to convince. I thought, if I can convince them, I can convince the general public."

With the California senate passing a bill on September 6 that would prohibit the sale, purchase, and possession of shark fins in the state of California, Li is one step closer to realizing her goal, and looking forward to the possibility of a national ban on shark fins and its primary use, shark-fin soup, across Canada.

"This has been a major victory for sharks," Li said. "California is home to the largest Chinese population outside of Asia, and because their government is taking this leadership, it's really creating the momentum for shark-fin bans around the world and for us in Canada."

California isn't the first U.S. state to take a stand on shark fins. A ban in Hawaii came into effect in 2010 and other states, including Washington and Oregon, have passed similar legislation. In Canada, the cities of Oakville and Brantford, Ontario, both passed municipal bills banning the possession and trade of shark fins earlier this year.

On September 9, Toronto city council unanimously voted to move forward on a staff report on a proposed bylaw against shark fins after hearing from several high-profile activists, including *Sharkwater* director Rob Stewart and Les Stroud, TV's *Survivorman*. The vote on a municipal shark-fin ban will come later this year.

"In Toronto they had a few city councillors that were champions and wanted to take it on a municipal level forward. It was a perfect storm there," Li said. "We're hoping for that to happen in Vancouver too, but right now our efforts are focused on supporting Toronto first."

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Li said that she believes that having celebrities, such as Stewart and Stroud in Toronto, as well as Leonardo DiCaprio and former NBA athlete Yao Ming in California, speak out about the cruelty of shark finning has helped increase awareness across North America. Meanwhile, celebrity chef [Gordon Ramsay](#) has been helping to build momentum for the fight against shark-fin soup in his U.K. series *Gordon Ramsay: Shark Bait*.

Li is hoping high-profile members of Vancouver's community will follow suit and speak out against shark-fin soup, which Li estimates is available in at least 100 Metro Vancouver restaurants.

"You need champions within the government and community who are willing to create a law and pass it," Li said. "At least in Vancouver, the constituency supporting sharks and who are against shark-fin soup is definitely growing."

Li and the volunteers at Shark Truth are currently working on a national online petition, as well as organizing the first Sans Fin Soup Contest, a competition to create an alternative to shark-fin soup.

"I think the unique thing about this event is it's the first of its kind to really engage the restaurant community in a conversation about shark fin and really ask them what they think," Li said.

The contest is open to all chefs and Chinese restaurants in Metro Vancouver. Dishes from eight finalists will be chosen for the public and a panel of judges to sample on October 13 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Renaissance Vancouver Hotel Harbourside (1133 West Hastings Street).

"It's going to be in their 360 room, the Vista Room, which actually spins 360 degrees," Li said. "So the underlying theme of our Sans Fin Soup Contest is 'changing perspectives'."

Judges for the contest will include Vancouver city councillor Kerry Jang, B.C. Chefs' Association president Edgar Rahal, and founder of Vancouver Food Tour and food blogger Melody Fury.

"We will also have a people's choice award where consumers can pick their favourite soup," Li said. Tickets to the event will be available on the Shark Truth [website](#) starting in mid-September, while the online petition will launch in the next few weeks.

"The shark-fin ban just goes to show there's so many groups that are really passionate about this, so many people that are passionate about this, and everyone's tackling this issue whatever way they can—municipal, provincial, national, grassroots, within their own family networks," Li said.

What do Li's parents think of Shark Truth and putting a stop to the consumption of shark-fin soup now?

"Now my mom's like my biggest fan, and she helps sell all of Shark Truth's T-shirts," Li said.

You can follow Michelle da Silva on Twitter at twitter.com/michdas.

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Karen Neubauer

Wed, 2011-09-14
05:11

Great!
Thanks to people like Claudia, the whole world is starting to say NO! to sharkfin soup. Hooray!

Who cares

Thu, 2011-09-15
02:51

If sharks are not remorseful when they kill human beings.. Why should we be any different?

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