



# Shark fin off the menu in Illinois; ban kicks in Jan. 1

BY STEFANO ESPOSITO Staff Reporter [sesposito@suntimes.com](mailto:sesposito@suntimes.com) December 31, 2012

You may find this hard to swallow: Shark fin soup is off the menu in Illinois, beginning Tuesday.

On the other hand, if you're like Roger Kao you probably won't care that it's now illegal to possess or sell the soup ingredient — an Asian delicacy.

"It tastes terrible," said Kao, manager of Great Beijing Restaurant in Lincolnwood. "I won't eat it."

Kao said shark fin soup is a special-request item at Great Beijing, and he was surprised to hear about the ban. He said he planned to track down some information about the new law.

Several Chicago-area Chinese restaurant managers and owners said Monday that they stopped selling shark fin soup a year or more ago, partly in preparation for the expected ban, but mostly because shark fin is so expensive — as high as \$300 a pound, one restaurant manager said.

Shark fin bans are already in place in Hawaii, Washington, Oregon and California. The Illinois bill's sponsor, State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), has said she collaborated with the state wing of the national Humane Society, which is helping lead an effort to curtail shark finning, the practice of extracting the animal's fin and throwing the shark back in the ocean.

Shark fin soup is generally more popular with Asian customers, some of whom believe the key ingredient has health benefits.

"The Asian people love it, the American people so-so," said one area Chinese restaurant employee who wouldn't give his name.

Although it's now illegal to sell the delicacy, that doesn't necessarily mean it will be impossible to find.

One restaurant employee, when asked if shark fin soup was still on the menu, said: "How many people?"

When told about the ban, the employee said, "Sorry, we don't sell (it)." Then he hung up.

Contributing: AP