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NEWS

Lionfish used in unique dishes as it becomes a problem on Florida waters



Lionfish: from a predator to an entree

By **Francesca Constantini** | July 14, 2019 at 9:29 PM EDT - Updated July 17 at 2:27 PM

SARASOTA, Fla. (WWSB) - Lionfish is considered one of the most destructive species in Florida's waters. FWC is encouraging people to remove them from Florida waters.

However, it's not something you see on menus at local restaurants everyday. On Sunday, it went from being a predator to an entrée.

“This is our Lionfish Derby tasting competition, featuring five local chefs,” said Allison Whitten, facility manager at Mote Marine Laboratory.

Dozens of seafood enthusiasts grabbed a bite to get a taste of this spiny, stripped creature.

“It’s my first time and I think it’s absolutely delicious. I wasn’t even aware that you can eat Lionfish. I know it’s an invasive species and people want to get rid of it,” said Heather Borghesi.

What makes Lionfish dangerous is they don’t really have a predator. It consumes more than 120 different species of fish and other marine life. It also reproduces at a high rate.

Every year, FWC holds a Lionfish Challenge from May to September to encourage and reward divers to remove these creatures from our waters.

While the annual Lionfish Derby was canceled on Saturday due to inclement weather, five chefs from Modern Events, Deep Sea Diner, Michael’s on East, Mattison’s and Indigenous were still able to showcase their craft, and the room was satisfied.

“Boy, what a selection here! There’s a wide use of vegetables, you have garden fresh food and it’s accented with that fresh fish,” said Mark Tracker.

This is not the only place where you can get a taste of Lionfish. Whole foods, for example, is the largest buyer of Lionfish in the state.

“Anything that has to do with food, and learning more about the environment, and how we can help,” said Borghesi.

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