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Chef Creehan's batch of lionfish draws rave reviews

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That was the consensus Monday evening when popular chef Tim Creehan cooked up some lionfish at the new Whole Foods Market at Destin Commons.

"I say, 'If you can't beat 'em, eat 'em!'" he told a standing-room only crowd at the Lucky Catch Bar & Bites located inside the store.

Creehan's cooking demonstration also included a presentation by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, which is trying to encourage more people to catch and harvest lionfish, an invasive species that's having a negative impact on native fish and habitats.



Popular chef Tim Creehan demonstrates how to filet, fry and saute lionfish at a cooking demonstration Monday at the new Whole Foods Market at Destin Commons.

Pterois

Genus of venomous fish
Also called lionfish



Pterois is a genus of venomous marine fish, commonly known as **lionfish**, native to the Indo-Pacific. Pterois, also called **zebrafish**, **firefish**, **turkeyfish** or **butterfly-cod**, is characterized by conspicuous warning coloration with red, white, creamy, or black bands, showy pectoral fins, and venomous spiky fin rays. Pterois radiata, Pterois volitans, and Pterois miles are the most commonly studied species in the genus. Pterois species are popular aquarium fish. P. volitans and P. miles are a recent and significant invasive species in the west Atlantic, Caribbean Sea and Mediterranean Sea,. — Wikipedia

Taxon Rank: Genus

Parent Taxon:  Scorpaenidae

Taxon Name: Pterois

Sources: Wikidata and Wikipedia. [Show details](#) ▾

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Some of the largest populations of lionfish are currently being found in Panhandle waters, said Kali Spurgin, FWC's lionfish coordinator.

"They are venomous but not poisonous, so you can eat the meat," she added.

As Spurgin fielded questions for curious locals and tourists, Creehan prepared two lionfish dishes — fried lionfish topped with creole remoulade sauce and bronzed lionfish served in an asparagus, tomato and garlic meunière sauce.

He demonstrated the proper way to filet lionfish and also offered frying tips.

"You've got a skin on here, which is very thin," he said, holding up the fish for everyone to see. "... My preference is to remove that. ... I've found with the

texture of lionfish, it works a little better to double batter.”

Creehan reminded folks to check for bones around the lionfish’s ribcage when cooking and said an extremely hot pan was the key to a good sauté.

The crowd was treated to generous samples of both dishes, complete with small servings of wine and beer.

“I would cook it. It’s delicious!” said Mona Broome of Destin. “But anything Tim Creehan cooks is delicious.”

Broome’s friend Linda Post agreed.

“I really liked the texture,” she said. “It was flaky.”

Creehan provided the audience members with copies of the two recipes and urged them to buy lionfish whenever possible.

Whole Foods is currently one of the first major retailer to sell lionfish, which is currently going for \$9.99 a pound.

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