

# Cooking sharks

by Lydia Lovell

Not many people, not even many Cape Codders, eat shark, but seafaring Lovells who embarked on foreign voyages during the heyday of whaling found that Orientals considered shark a delicacy. They still do. You may have been served shark fin soup at a Chinese restaurant and thought little of the fact you were eating shark. The Orientals are not unique; our British cousins traditionally use shark meat for their celebrated fish 'n' chips. And, not to be outdone, Aunt Olivia had her own methods of preparing shark for the table.

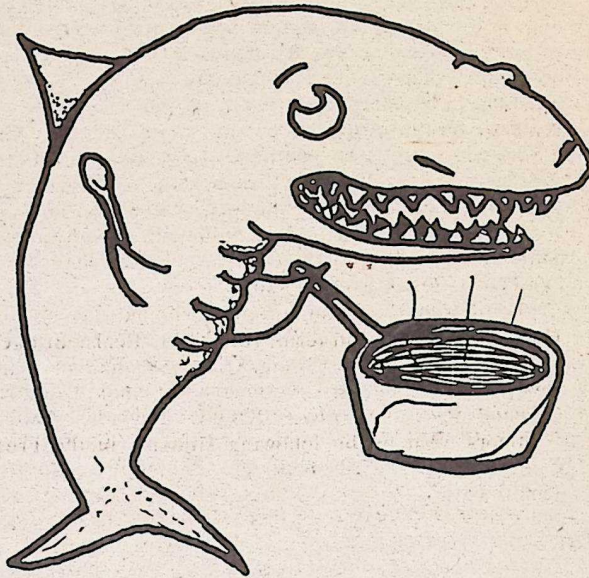
During the early 1900s sand sharks were commercially fished and processed on Nantucket and, while sand sharks are edible, the flesh of our Atlantic Mako and that of the dogfish or hound shark were the varieties Aunt Olivia preferred. Ranking almost as high were hammerheads, lemons, bonnetheads, sharp-noses, and blacktips. Basking sharks were sought by sperm whalers not only for their meat, but also because their liver oils were nearly as good to burn in lamps as sperm oil.

Shark are differentiated from other fish by the fact they have no bones; instead, their skeletons are made of cartilage. This characteristic makes cleaning, butchering, and cooking shark a relatively easy task. The fillets are white, firm, and of a flaky texture similar to that of haddock.

Aunt Olivia's method of handling a freshly-caught shark was simplicity itself. When someone brought her a nice little dogfish, for example, she filleted the meat, left the skin on, and then soaked the fillets for at least four hours or overnight in ice water to which she added a tablespoon of cider vinegar for each two pounds of meat. She kept the fish refrigerated, of course. This process neutralized any ammonia flavor that might otherwise be detected in the shark meat.

After soaking, if she was not ready to use the fish immediately, Aunt Olivia drained it, wiped it with a clean cloth, wrapped it loosely in waxed paper, and kept it on ice until cooking time. Like all fresh fish, of course, shark ought to be cooked within 24 hours after being caught.

Cooking shark? Its firm texture and pleasant flavor lend themselves to a variety of methods. Shark may be broiled, baked, fried, poached, barbecued, sauteed, or used in



chowder and casseroles. The cooked meat is delicious flaked and added to salads and dips.

Aunt Olivia served from four to six people with two pounds of shark fillet when she made **Baked Shark with Vegetables**.

**2 lbs. shark fillets, skinned and cut into serving-sized portions**  
**4 large potatoes, peeled and sliced**  
**2 large white or yellow onions, peeled and sliced**  
**6 large carrots, scraped and cut in half-inch slices**  
**½ cup milk, salt, pepper, chopped fresh parsley**

Parboil vegetables 20 minutes in small quantity of water. Grease a two-quart shallow casserole with a tight-fitting cover. Arrange fish in a single layer on bottom. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Spread drained vegetables over fish. Pour milk over all and sprinkle with parsley. Cover and bake at 350° for 20 minutes or until fish flakes easily with fork.

Because Uncle Henry considered **Broiled Shark with Orange Butter** a special treat, Aunt Olivia used this recipe which yields an entree for four people:

**1½ lb. shark fillets**                      **3 T. orange juice concentrate**  
**¼ t. salt, ¼ t. pepper**                  **3 T. melted butter/margarine**  
**1 sliced orange and 3 T. snipped parsley flakes for garnish**

Skin shark fillets and cut into serving-size portions. Place fish in a single layer in a shallow greased broiling pan. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Combine melted butter and orange juice concentrate (lacking concentrate, Aunt Olivia boiled down the juice of two oranges to 2 tablespoonful). Pour half the orange-butter over fish. Broil approximately 4 inches from source of heat for four minutes. Turn fish, baste with remaining orange butter. Broil six to eight minutes longer or until fish is flaky. Garnish and serve.

For those of you with a taste for Italian food, serve (with garlic bread and tossed green salad) **Shark Italiano**.

**1½ lb. shark fillets**                      **1 can (16 oz.) stewed tomatoes**  
**½ t. salt, ¼ t. pepper**                  **1 cup grated mozzarella cheese**  
**Watercress for garnish**

Skin fillets and divide into four portions. Place fish in a single layer in well-greased 1½ quart casserole. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Combine tomatoes and half of cheese; spread over fish. Sprinkle remaining cheese on top. Bake 20 to 25 minutes at 350° or until fish flakes easily. Garnish with watercress. Serves four.

When Aunt Olivia had more shark meat than needed for one meal, she poached the extra for use in salads or snacks. No one fortunate enough to sit down to **Fish, Carrot and Nut Salad** at the Lovells ever left the table hungry. Enough for four generous portions.

**1½ C. cooked flaked shark**              **1 C. sour cream (dairy type)**  
**1 pkg. (3 oz.) orange gelatin**          **½ C. grated carrots**  
**1½ C. boiling water**                    **1 can (8 oz.) drained crushed**  
**½ C. chopped pecans**                  **pineapple**  
**Parsley for garnish**

In a one-quart bowl, combine gelatin with water; stir until dissolved. Add sour cream, stir until blended, and pour into well-oiled 2-quart shallow mold. Chill until partially thickened. Add fish, carrots, pineapple, and pecans. Chill until firm. Serve on lettuce bed.

**Shark Snacks** (24 hors d'oeuvres), Aunt Olivia style:

Combine in a 1-quart bowl:

**1 C. cooked flaked shark meat**  
**2 pkg. (3 oz.) cream cheese, softened to room temperature**  
**3 T. mayonnaise, 2 T. softened butter or margarine**  
**1½ T. finely minced green onions.**

With a 2" cookie cutter, make 24 rounds of bread (or purchase small loaf). Butter bread rounds on one side; place in single layer on baking sheet and broil until lightly browned. (Watch carefully!) Turn and toast other side. Remove from oven. Place a tablespoon of fish mixture on buttered side of rounds.

Into a small bowl, grate one cup of Swiss cheese. Sprinkle top of each round with about a teaspoon of grated cheese. Replace rounds in a single layer on the baking sheet. Broil approximately 4 inches from source of heat for three to five minutes or until thoroughly heated and the cheese is melted and golden. Yield: 24.

Aunt Olivia created her own version of a **Shark Dinner**, and this is a time-honored Friday-night-supper when four Lovells gather.

**1½ C. cooked flaked shark meat**                                      **½ C. milk**  
**1 10-oz. pkg. frozen peas**              **½ C. grated processed cheese**  
**(2 cups fresh)**                              **Patty shells or toast**  
**1 can mushroom soup**                      **Parsley for garnish**

In a frying pan, boil ¼ cup water, add frozen peas and cook 5 minutes. Add soup and milk and stir thoroughly; add fish and grated cheese. Heat thoroughly stirring occasionally. Serve in patty shells or on buttered toast points. Garnish with parsley. Baked potatoes, buttered carrots, and a fruit salad will round out the dinner. For dessert? How about **Impossible Pie**?

**2 eggs**    **Pinch salt**  
**1 C. milk**    **1 t. vanilla**  
**½ C. sugar**                                      **½ stick oleo**  
**¼ C. flour**                                        **½ C. shredded coconut**

Put all ingredients in blender or food processor. Blend or process for just a few seconds. Pour into a greased pie pan. Bake 40 minutes at 350° or until top is golden and toasty. **IMPOSSIBLE?** Of course. But do try it.