

BBC Learning English
6 Minute English
Shark's fin soup



NB: This is not a word for word transcript

Yvonne: This is 6 Minute English, I'm Yvonne Archer - and Finn has kindly joined me for today's programme. Hello Finn!

Finn: Hello Yvonne – how are you?

Yvonne: Oh, I'm great thanks! Now, 2011 is the year of the Rabbit in the Chinese **lunar calendar** - and Finn, your name is a brilliant **clue** for today's topic.

Finn: It is.

Yvonne: We're talking about a traditional dish that many people expect to find on the menu to celebrate the New Year!

Finn: Yes, so what could it be? My name is Finn and we're talking about the dish 'shark's fin soup'.

Yvonne: Excellent! Now, in Taiwan this year, shark's fin soup may be missing from quite a few menus. But before we find out why – I've a question for you, Finn. Are you ready?

Finn: Okay, I'm ready.

Yvonne: Good. Which type of shark is the longest fish in the world?
a) the great white shark

- b) the whale shark or
- c) the hammerhead shark

Finn: Okay, let me see. Well, whales are very big so I think - b) the whale shark.

Yvonne: Right - and I'll tell you whether you're right or wrong later on! For some time now, **animal rights activists** have been calling for **a ban** on shark's fin soup because of the way the sharks are treated. Finn, explain what 'a ban' is for us please, because it doesn't mean the same as 'illegal' does it?

Finn: No, not quite. 'A ban' is an official order or statement saying that something isn't allowed anymore, rather than a law saying that something is illegal - or that it's a crime. For example, in the UK, smoking cigarettes in offices is banned but it's not against the law to smoke cigarettes.

Yvonne: Right. Once their fins are chopped off, many sharks are just **thrown back** into the sea to die.

Finn: Yes, and sadly for the sharks, the simple reason for this is because it saves space on the fishermen's boats.

Yvonne: Mm, it is very sad. Now **the campaign** against shark's fin soup is starting to show small signs of progress. But the BBC's Cindy Sui was still able to find a restaurant window in Taiwan's capital, Taipei, where a large, dried shark's fin was on display. Here's what the restaurant's manager told Cindy:

Insert 1: Restaurant owner, Taipei

Look at our restaurant, there's hardly any business. The media coverage has affected us, but many of the fish are caught whole, not just for the fins. In Taiwan, we eat all the shark, not just the fin.

Yvonne: The restaurant owner says that **the media coverage** about the campaign to ban shark's fin soup means he's had fewer customers. As he puts it: "there's hardly any business". Finn, can you explain what he means by 'the media coverage' though?

Finn: Yes, well it means things like articles in newspapers and online, as well as news bulletins and programmes on television and radio – all the publicity, all gathered together - that's what we call 'media coverage'.

Yvonne: Great. Taiwan catches between 40,000 and 60,000 tons of shark meat each year for its own use, and the restaurant manager we heard from clearly doesn't agree that there should be a ban on shark's fin. Now, you lived in Taiwan for a few years, didn't you Finn?

Finn: I did – yes.

Yvonne: Was this an issue there at the time?

Finn: Well, I lived there about 10 years ago and I have to say there wasn't a lot of media coverage about banning shark's fin soup at the time.

Yvonne: So, let's find out who is getting involved in the campaign at this time to help save sharks from a cruel death, from the BBC's Cindy Sui:

Insert 2: Cindy Sui, BBC Correspondent, Taipei

In recent years, an increasing number of young people in Taiwan are refusing to order shark's fin or serve it at their wedding banquets, even though it has long been considered a must on banquet menus. Celebrities have also spoken out against eating shark's fin.

Yvonne: So celebrities have spoken out against eating shark's fin?

Finn: They have. They've made it clear to the public that they support a ban – they've spoken out against it.

Yvonne: And young people are refusing to order shark's fin or to serve it at wedding feasts, even though it's traditional. We could say they're **'boycotting'** it, couldn't we Finn?

Finn: We could yes – 'boycotting'.

Yvonne: So when you were in that part of the world Finn, was it really **'a must'** – an essential choice on a good menu for special occasions? And I'm scared to ask, but have you tried shark's fin soup?

Finn: You know - I have actually. And yes, it was at a special occasion - a wedding in Taiwan, and it did taste very nice. But at the same time, you feel a bit bad because of the cruelty to the shark. And of course, it's a very **prestigious** dish in Chinese culture.

Yvonne: But if the whole fish is being eaten, wouldn't that make a difference?

Finn: I think yes, if you were to eat the whole fish and it wasn't wasted, then that would make a big difference. And I think that's really at the core of the issue here, isn't it?

Yvonne: I think so. Now, earlier Finn, I asked: Which type of shark is the longest fish in the world.

Finn: Mm-hmm. And I said b) the whale shark. Was I right?

Yvonne: Errr....

Finn: Was I right?

Yvonne: Yes!

Finn: Oh, fantastic!

Yvonne: Well done Finn! And the longest ever recorded was 13.5 metres.

Finn: Now that is very long, isn't it.

Yvonne: Huge – yes.

Finn: That's a big shark!

Yvonne: Now, how about a Chinese New Year greeting to say goodbye from today's "6 Minute English"?

Finn: Yes, this is the beginning of the year of the rabbit, so we can say: "Happy New Year" which is: "Xin nian kuai le". Yvonne?

Yvonne: Xin nian kuai le.

Finn: Xin nian kuai le. Happy New Year everyone!

Yvonne: Happy New Year!

Finn: Bye for now

Yvonne: Goodbye!

Vocabulary and definitions

lunar calendar	something that shows the days and months in a year, based on the moon's journey around the Earth each month
a clue	a piece of information which can help to find answers
animal rights activists	people who try to bring attention to the cruel treatment of animals and get laws introduced to help protect them
a ban	an official order or statement saying that something isn't allowed
thrown back	carelessly tossed or flung to where it came from
the campaign	the organised set of activities aimed at achieving an objective
the media coverage	all the information given about a particular situation or event in newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, websites etc
boycotting	refusing to buy goods or be involved in activities because you don't agree with them

a must	something which most people think is essential
prestigious	highly thought of, respected and valued

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