

HONESTLY, THERE'S NO SUBSTITUTE FOR...

The great taste of shark's fin soup

WHILE I appreciate Associate Professor Thomas Menkhoff's concern for shark's fin traders ("The cluster effect and shark's fin trade"; last Wednesday), I disagree that artificial shark's fin can ever replace the real stuff.

Honestly, and in fairness to shark's fin soup lovers, environmentalists should take

the trouble to understand why diners are drawn to the dish.

I love it because the taste can be described only as heavenly – a gift from the gods.

Artificial shark's fin made out of gelatin has not been able to replace the genuine stuff despite years of efforts.

Added to that is the cultural link: Shark's fin has been on the

Chinese menu since the Ming Dynasty more than half a millennium ago.

The exponential surge of the world's population has put a strain on ocean resources. It is natural that shark populations have shrunk due to loss of their feeding habitats.

Large-scale fisheries have also depleted global fish stocks, and

made sharks an unfortunate by-product of its exploitation, by killing them in the search for other fish like the blue-fin tuna.

So let us be clear about who is to blame for the significant depletion of the world's shark populations. It certainly isn't shark's fin soup lovers like me.

Paul Chan