NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Everybody was just amazed at the quality of the meat and the number of ways it could be prepared, said the man who arranged an alligator meat tasting demonstration.

“We didn’t have one discouraging word,” said Windell Curole of Louisiana State University’s extension service in Houma, who arranged an alligator meat tasting demonstration.

“My brother has a seafood restaurant. We’re going to bring him a sample of it — to taste it. And maybe he’ll be able to sell it in his restaurant.”

That’s the sort of reaction Curole was hoping for when he invited about 25 or 30 restaurant owners, members of homemakers clubs, and reporters to the tasting. Alligator meat is left in the bayous by hunters who kill the big reptiles for their valuable skins, and Curole wants to create a demand for it.

“We’d like to get it started small, and then it could expand,” he said.

Alligator hunting was outlawed in the 1960s under laws designed to prevent a species. But ‘gators made such a resurgence along Louisiana’s coast that hunting was again allowed in four parishes in 1972 and extended to eight more this year under strict laws designed to prevent a black market.

Kathleen Hebert of the Commerce Department’s National Marine Fisheries agreed.

“When I first heard about alligator meat I said the only way I’d eat it was if I didn’t know what it was,” she said. And after?

“It was delicious. It tasted like pork chops or pork roast. The dip tasted like chicken salad. And there was a stew, barbecue, dip, meat balls, fried alligator — which was delicious; smothered alligator — smothered in onions and seasoning.

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