

Delicious new food in the making: Catfish with alligator genes resists fish disease problems

A group of scientists at Auburn University [published a paper](#) in January detailing their efforts to genetically modify catfish with the cathelicidin gene of an alligator.

Cathelicidin, found in the intestines, is an antimicrobial peptide responsible for helping [organisms fight diseases](#).

The gene, which was added using CRISPR, heightened disease resistance among the catfish in comparison to wild catfish. Researchers noted that the survival rates of the catfish were “two- and five-fold higher” in an interview with [MIT Technology Review](#).

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Because researchers added the cathelicidin to a gene for a reproductive hormone, it also reduced the catfish’s ability to reproduce, which they said was important to prevent genetic contamination of the hybrid fish with wild catfish.

The authors noted some uncertainties in using CRISPR technology — primarily used and studied in mammals— on fish. The paper has not yet been peer-reviewed.

However, researchers hope that the alligator and catfish gene-editing can be used in tandem with other catfish breeding techniques to help farmers with their catfish yields.

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Although consumers may be uncomfortable with the idea of their catfish sharing DNA with an alligator, Rex Dunham and Baofeng Su, two of the lead researchers of the study, told MTR that the hybrid meat would be perfectly safe.

“I would eat it in a heartbeat,” Dunham told MTR.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here**](#)