



Keep Things Simple For Catfish

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Most catfish anglers prefer to keep things simple when pursuing their favorite fish. A fancy boat or expensive gear is not needed when pursuing the main ingredient for a fish fry. All that's really required is a bit of patience, a supply of bait and a good recipe for hush puppies.

Though there are some anglers who fish from boats, many catfish enthusiasts choose to relax along a quiet stretch of shoreline and carefully monitor their rod tips for a tell-tale nibble.

The typical downstate catfish pole may be something as simple as a cane pole, or a more sophisticated graphite or fiberglass rod. It is important, however, that the rod be sensitive enough to detect a bite, yet stout enough to horse in those big ones.

Most anglers elect to use a somewhat longer rod - seven feet or more in length. They usually have stiff center sections with flexible tips. The attached reels must cast well, have a smooth drag, and a clicker mode.

The strong odor of catfish baits are nothing unusual to those who enjoy this species. The basic theory is to entice the catfish to seek out, mouth and then eat the bait.

Topping the "strong odor" category are a variety of concoctions widely known as dip baits. These cheese- or blood-based mixtures are sold commercially at local bait shops throughout the area. Many establishments stock several different kinds and brands.

Water current helps spread the news of easy meals. The system is composed of a plastic "dip" worm that is submerged in the mixture until a glob is formed around it. The plastic worm and mix is cast upstream of a likely catfish haunt and the odor spreads downstream with the current. Fish follow the scent back to the bait and, hopefully, gobble it down.

Oftentimes equally productive, natural baits are a little more pleasant to handle.

Nightcrawlers, crayfish and minnows yield good catches. These baits do produce a smell that attracts catfish, but it is a bit more subtle than the dip baits.

Cut baits are another popular choice among local catfish anglers. Baitfish such as suckers, chubs, or shad are "steaked out" and the pieces are threaded on a hook. Some anglers even fillet the baitfish and thread it on the hook.

The typical downstate catfish rig is equally uncomplicated. Regardless of the bait being used, catfish rigs come in one of four styles.

Many anglers prefer to use a sinker then swivel tied to the line and a 12-inch leader down to the bait. Another popular variation that includes a sinker and snap swivel attached to a short leader of six inches or less. Both of the above are popular with anglers who like to frequently change dip bait worms.

Another common rig is composed of a three-way swivel tied to the main line. A six-inch drop line holds a lead sinker. The remaining end of the swivel is attached to a 12-inch leader holding the hook and bait.

The final rig utilizes a slip float that is held in place by a bead and stop knot. The moveable stop knot allows the float to be adjusted and allows the angler to suspend the bait at a desired depth. The line continues to a swivel, weight and bait that is held near

the bottom of slow-current areas.

In each case, the swivel is used to prevent a twisting catfish from tangling the line in an attempt to get away.

A hooked catfish it will do its best to break the line. For that reason, most catfish anglers use 12-pound-test or heavier line. With a high-quality tough line, the catfish angler can fish around rocky or stumpy underwater terrain.