

Smallmouth Tactics in a Southern Swamp

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JULY 12 - 16

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR:

Hi Everyone! Record high temperatures hit the Pacific Northwest and for a few days we got to experience what our fellow citizens in the Southwest deal with every day. I don't know about you, but it sure makes me happy to live in the Pacific Northwest. My wife and I decided the best way to battle the heat was to outsmart it, so on the hottest day of the heat wave we drove up to Lake Samish and fished from 5am to 10am. It was about ten degrees cooler than Redmond and being on the water helped as well. Besides a wake boarder that decided the only place to wake board was around us we had the lake to ourselves. The fishing wasn't great, but it was nice to get out outside and be cool. This month's edition is focused on warmwater bass (ironic). Enjoy!



Mike Carey - mike@northwestfishingreports.com

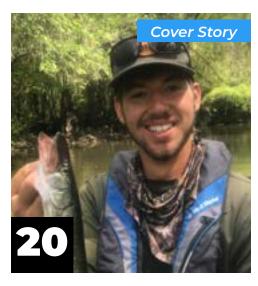
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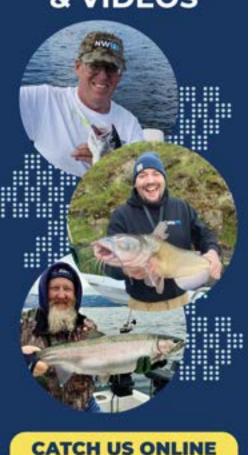
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HOT REPORTS FROM NORTHWESTFISHINGREPORTS.COM

By: Mike Carey

THIS MONTH'S HOT REPORTS can be interpreted literal as the Pacific Northwest went through a record-breaking heat wave! But that didn't stop NWFR members from getting out and doing what we all love - fishing! Here are some reports that caught our eyes.

Area Ten resident coho action has been good for some.

Area 10 Coho Salmon

The resident coho salmon season opened, and reports were mixed. That said, resident salmon in Puget Sound are a lot of fun and can be very hot the first few weeks of the season. Long time NWFR member "Seattle Pat" had good success. Five silvers kept and two kings released is a good day! Read his report here: **CLICK HERE**



Riffe lake is producing well.

Riffe Lake

Yakhusker had a stellar day on Riffe. The launch is challenging but if you get on the water it can be very good fishing for silvers and trout. Limits every day is what we like to hear! Riffe lake was planted with a LOT of triploid trout and in the years to come it should become outstanding for trout. The big question on everyone's minds is how will the silvers be affected? Stay tuned and check out the reports as they come in...CLICK HERE

Pike fishing on Hayden Lake?

This was an awesome report and video from brent338. Did you know you can embed videos in your fishing reports? It's amazing to see how far we've come being able to share information! Read and watch here: **CLICK HERE**

Herefishy

(a great NWFR name BTW) reports she got a beautiful 20" cutthroat out of Lake Sammamish. Pretty impressive for this fishery any time of the year, in particularly in summer. They also got a couple kokanee (safely released) and a small blackmouth. Urban fisheries are great! Details Here: CLICK HERE

We all love fresh clams - right? Clam chowder, clam linguine... my mouth is watering! NWFR member nerka nailer took a break from fishing and gave us a report on hot clamming on the Washington beaches. We are so blessed to have all these opportunities! Read Here: **CLICK HERE**



Long Lake is hot for smallmouth bass right now.

Spokane Long Lake

Lake has a bit of everything for anglers. For NWFR member ifightnerz it was a smallmouth bass on every other cast – that is some steady action! He included a Hotspot to help you out. Read his report Here: **CLICK HERE**

Goodwin Lake

JoshH sent us a nice report and video on the rainbow trout action at American Lake. He had a pretty impressive catch lineup. He reports an Olive Wooly Bugger and a green Doc Spratley fly 16 inches behind a dodger was the hot ticket. American Lake has a new launch area. Worth checking out. His report: **CLICK HERE**



American Lake is fishing well for rainbows. Hint...try flies behind a dodger.



I hope your summer is full of Hot Reports of your own. Be sure to post them on NWFR's website for your chance at a \$25 gift card. The picture contest is running weekly and you can enter as often as you go fishing. Good luck out there!

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by Hannah Pennebaker

Every odd year in the state of Washington, something amazing happens. Hundreds of thousands of pink salmon will be flooding our shores to make their biannual migration to their spawning grounds. They are the most plentiful salmon in our state, and every angler in the Northwest looks forward to their return. Pinks are also called humpies because the males grow a large hump on their back as they near spawning. They have a delicate, pink meat that is absolutely delicious when grilled or smoked. It is not quite as rich as coho or king salmon meat, but kids or people that don't like fish might actually prefer the milder taste.

One of the best things about pink salmon is that they are readily caught from shore. Most pinks are caught by casting out and jigging 2-5 inch lures designed to look like injured bait fish. There are numerous local piers and beaches where you have a great shot at catching your limit. Pinks are the smallest in the salmon family, so they are wonderful fish to get kids started on. Kids can easily learn and master the art of jigging. Let's go over the basics of where and how to catch these treasured fish.

Locations

While coho and king salmon can be tough to catch, pink salmon are plentiful and swim close to shore. Some popular locations to fish for them include Dash Point Pier, Point Defiance Pier, Redondo Pier, Edmonds Pier, and Alki Point. It's great fun to join the chaos

Shad's are scrappy fighters and ready biters- you can easily catch a dozen in the morning!

SUMMER SALTWATER SHORE FISHING FOR SALMON CONT.



of pier fishing. Often, the school will come through and half the dock will have a fish on. Seasoned pier fishermen will bring their own net in the form of a crab ring attached to a long rope. Most nets don't have a long enough handle to reach all the way down to the water from the height of a dock. It's not recommended to hoist pinks up and over for three reasons. One, you can break your rod. Two, you risk smacking the fish onto the concrete, which bruises the meat. Three, if you accidentally hook a fish you must release, such as a wild coho or king, you risk hurting the fish's chances of survival by hitting it against pilings or the concrete. Alternatively, if you have waders and don't mind getting a little wet, Owen Beach, Browns Point, and Tacoma Narrows Park can also be lucrative. Piers can fill up quickly during a pink salmon year, so it might behoove you to seek out a more spacious beach instead. The principles are the same as pier fishing, but you won't have to worry about netting them from a great height. If one section of the beach is full, you can always move. I've had success at both high and low tides, at all times of the day. The key is to be patient and wait for the school to come through.

Tackle

As their name suggests, pink salmon will bite any offering, as long as it's pink. But if you take a moment to walk along any pier or beach during a pink year, 90% of anglers will be using buzz bombs. Buzz bombs come in a variety of different sizes and colors. For pinks, I'd recommend a pink buzz bomb in the smallest size. Feel free to try a larger offering if the current is strong or the water is particularly deep. Another lure that's similar to buzz bombs is becoming increasingly popular.



Some popular hardware to toss from shore or docks.

Rotators resemble their more famous cousin, but are slightly more rounded and have a reflective strip in the middle. Both lures are worked the same way and have similar action. Point Wilson darts, candlefish, spoons, and hoochies are viable choices as well. These also imitate injured bait fish and come in a variety of different weights so you can make sure you're getting deep enough.

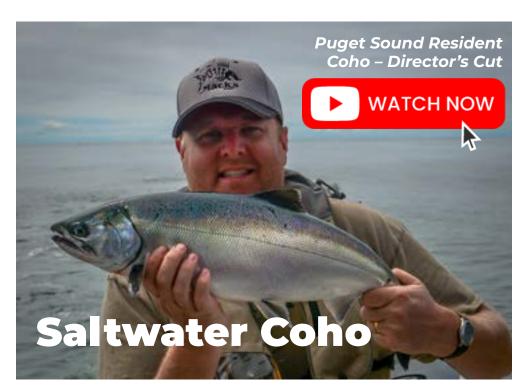
One thing to remember, no matter what lure you use, is to use a single point, barbless hook. Unfortunately, most lures come with treble hooks already attached. You can snip off the hook with a pair of pliers, and put on a 1/0 or 2/0 siwash hook. To jig for pinks, find a spot where you think fish are holding and start off by casting close to you. Look for places where current slows down or stops, or for jumping bait fish. Cast out, let your lure sink, raise your arm up about 6 inches to raise the lure, and then drop your arm to let the lure flutter down. Most strikes will happen as the lure falls because it looks like a wounded bait fish to any fish looking for an easy meal. Progressively cast further away and at different angles so you can work all depths and locations. If you don't get any strikes, try a different lure or location. You can also try different jigging techniques. Vary up your retrieve speed and depth to figure out what the fish want that day.

Jigging for pink salmon from shore is an easy. inexpensive way to get delicious meat for your smoker or grill this summer. For most of us in the Northwest, pinks hold a special place in our hearts because it was the very first salmon we caught. This is a great way to introduce kids and beginners alike to salmon fishing. Make sure to stop by Northwest Fishing Reports to find some hot spots, and leave a report of your own to help other fishermen out. Have fun!





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by Jason Brooks

It might only be July and coho are far from most anglers minds but resident fish have been biting for a while now. Marine Area 10, the waters out front of Seattle and Bremerton, are becoming a coho primer hotspot the past few years. The smaller fish that mill around in Puget Sound feeding on anchovies, herring, shrimp, squid and anything else they can find. Resident coho are fun to catch but it is the "ocean fish" that get most anglers excited. The sea going silvers start showing up in late July through September, with a few late fish in October. The main bulk of the run is late August and September but July is the time to get excited about coho.

Washington waters are projected to see a return of 2,446,348 coho this year with 1,589,600 of those heading to the Columbia River system. The coast along with Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay area will see 241,800 fish and Puget Sound is projected to get back 614,948. All of those are strong numbers and good reason to head out to the saltwater and intercept coho as they return.

For the open ocean, coho can be hard to find but once you do find them they are easy to catch. Traveling in large schools, and staying in the top water, coho fishing can be fast and furious once the fish are located. Often you find the coho while trying to get the gear out, as it gets tossed around in the prop wash while you are trying to clip the line on the downrigger cable. Coho like turbulent top water and often target baitfish close to the surface. They see the shadow of the boat, the flash of the gear trailing behind in the turbid water from the prop and shoot up, grabbing your bait and hopefully you grab your rod before it goes overboard.

The best way to actually find coho in the open ocean is to look for birds. Anytime you see diving birds splashing into the water means a bait ball close to the surface. Under the bait are coho pushing the smaller feeder fish up and creating a pinch point where the birds attack from above and the silvers from below. Drop the gear down and start circling the area. Once you find the bait ball on your sonar fish through it and under it. Watch the rods and doubles are more likely to occur when fishing a bait like this. Another way to get more bites is to put out a third rod, if you have enough anglers on board. A 5-ounce mooching weight 48-inches in front of a cut plug herring or a coyote spoon smeared with Pro-Cure Herring Super Gel and drop it down about 50 feet behind the boat. The extra rod will increase your bites as it is fishing a bit shallower than your gear on the downrigger.

Mooching for coho can be productive too but it seems trolling gets more bites when searching for fish. This is because you can troll around the bait ball and go find the fish. Mooching means being in the right zone and is a great way to catch coho in areas where they will stack up such as off of points in Puget Sound.

When it comes to trolling you can downsize the gear a bit as the fish are smaller than chinook. An 8-inch flasher like the ones from and Flasher Company out of Durham, California are great for coho fishing. Their Coral Crush Superglow has a moon jelly crushed tape on them that reflects light as well as glows to draw the coho attention. Trail it with a small spoon such as 3-inch Coyote spoon in the cop car (black and white) color or a Coho Killer spoon in the Herring Aide color. If vou prefer to fish bait then a herring hood is a surefire way to get back in the water quick and know you always have a good spin on the bait. New this year are whole bait hoods by Luhr Jensen. Super simple to use and very effective. No need to pull out a sharp knife and try to cut a fast spin while out bobbing around in the ocean. Simply put a brined herring that has been soaking overnight in Pro-Cure's Brine-n-Bright into the hood, push the pin (a small stainless steel nail, unlike other hoods that use a plastic pin or a toothpick that can break) and either let the hooks dangle free or stick the top hook into the bait. Allowing the trailing hook to be free adds some realistic movement of a tail as well as it is likely to stick into the fish as it grabs the bait.

Bechhold & Son's Lure

When tying up my own herring leaders I use a smaller trailer hook. The top or front hook is a 3/0 Big River Gamakatsu and the trailing hook is a size 1 Big River Gamakatsu tied on 25-pound clear Izorline XXX. When I pre-tie my leaders I tie them at 48-inches. This



allows me to have leaders ready to go for several applications. If I need one for a hootchie rig set up just slip on the rig and then cut to size. For a plug cut herring, anchovy hood or herring hood/helmet leave the leader longer and add a chain swivel.

With hoochie rigs, or squid rigs, you want the flasher to give the lure action so a shorter leader is needed. I have used as short at 9-inches and as long as 36-inches but my standard it 27-inches. The 27-inch rule came from a buddy who fished Puget Sound religiously and that is what he used and it worked so that is why it has become my "go to" leader length. Another "trick" when it comes to fishing plastic squid or hoochies rigs is to use a clear or semi-clear squid and a skirt insert. Again, Luhr Jensen sells their Flash Fly in packets of 3 and are smaller than the standard 4-inch squid skirt. Use a green, blue or pink insert and add flash to your outfit as well as contrasting colors. You can turn a purple haze or pearlescent squid skirt with a blue or green Flash Fly into a bait that represents an anchovy or herring to match the bait fish. Fill the cavity with Pro-Cure Bait Sauce that is super sticky and you have a set-up that will fish for hours, or until you find the fish without worry of the bait being ruined. That is the biggest difference between fishing fresh bait or a lure.

Where to fish really isn't a problem if you do a little research. The most important thing is to know the regulations. Marine Area 4 and 5, or otherwise known as the Straight of Juan de Fuca, is one of the most productive saltwater coho areas anywhere in the Pacific Northwest. This is because you are intercepting all of the fish heading to Washington, Oregon and even parts of British Columbia depending on how far out you go. As well as Area 5 just out in front of Sekiu is fairly protected waters. Here travel out to the shipping lanes in about 600 feet of water. This might sound a bit intimidating but all you have to do is target the top 50 to 100 feet. Once



you find where the fish are traveling through it is a matter of sorting out the hatchery fish from the wild fish.

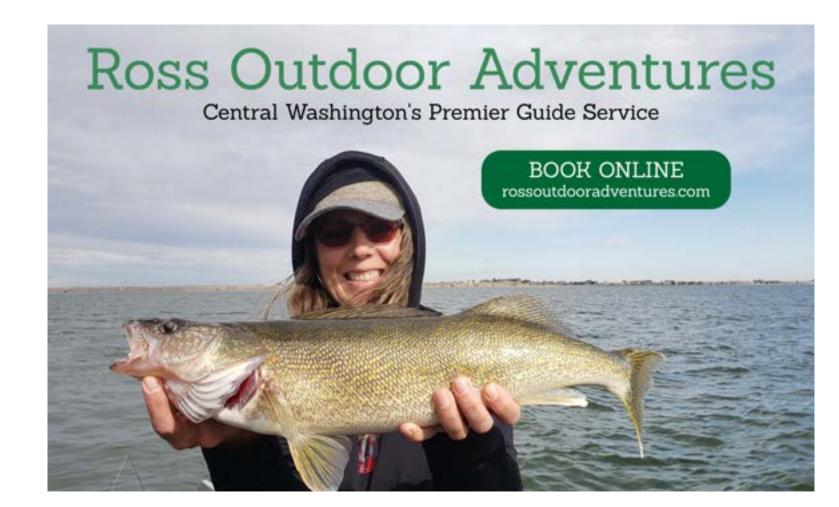
The open ocean is a great place to intercept the Columbia bound coho as well as those heading to Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay. Marine Area 2 which are waters off of Westport can be really productive but is not for small boats. This past June we headed out of Westport for the Chinook opener in an 18-foot Striper. At the boat launch we met with two U.S. Coast Guardsman who did a safety equipment check. Having everything we needed I asked about the Bar crossing and ocean conditions. They looked at their phone and told me "no restrictions and 5-foot swells at 10 seconds". Sounded good until my buddy Ted Schuman called me as we launched. He urged us not to go, adding that the wind was coming out of the north at 12 knots and by this afternoon he figured it would be near 30 knots and the outgoing tide in the middle of the day would make it almost impossible to get back across the bar before 3pm. Ted commercially fished out of Westport for over 25 years. We took his pleas with caution but decided to try it anyway. Once we got across the bar the real conditions where 8 foot swells at 3 seconds with breaking wind waves on top. Ted was right, and the young Coast Guardsman did exactly what we did, which was look at a prediction website. The lesson we learned is trust experience and when it comes to the Westport bar use caution. We immediately turned around and went back to the harbor before the tide change. Later that day we talked to the fish checker and learned that most boats came in empty. It is hard to troll with winds pushing your boat 7 miles per hour and no way to troll into the waves or back troll without swamping your boat. Use caution when fishing the open ocean.

Puget Sound anglers have a lot of options and a lot of fish this year. With it being a pink salmon year you might have a harder time catching coho simply because you will be catching pinks, but that is a good problem to have. One river that is getting back a lot of coho this year is the Green, or Duwamish at 77,519 silvers. Look to places like Jeff Head or out in front of Shilshole Marina. Be sure to check the regulations including the "e-regs" or emergency regulations for closures and limits. The Puyallup River is getting back 40,851 and the fishery off of Redondo is popular to intercept southern Puget

Sound fish. As the coho near the Puyallup and Commencement Bay they have to go around Browns Point and trolling here can get you into schools of fish, both coho and pinks this year.

Southern Puget Sound is projected to get back 79,338 coho including those bound for Minter Creek and the Sqauxin Island net pens. Try the Narrows by the bridges. Troll along the western shoreline between Point Evans and the Tacoma Narrows Bridges or mooch here as well. Those that prefer to mooch will be in deeper water and do so on the incoming tide which pushes you south. Trollers tend to hug the shoreline and kelp beds and fishing here just before tide change through high tide works best. Once you cross under the bridges heading south you enter Marine Area 13 and the regulations change once again to no wild fish allowed. Be sure that if you are fishing in area 11 and have an unclipped coho on the boat that you don't go under the bridges and keep fishing into Marine Area 13 or you could get a ticket.

Saltwater coho are a lot of fun and can be action packed. With the amount of fish returning this year be sure to get out early and get these fish before they hit the rivers. Silvers in the saltwater shouldn't be overlooked. Easy to catch, fun to fight and a lot of fish sounds like a good time to





salmon, kokanee, trout, and walleye.

go fishing. 14 | NWFRTV.com







wigglefin.com



by Mike Carey

We passed cattle lazily grazing along the lush green rolling hillside, while antelope watched us cautiously, ready at moment's notice to bolt to safety. The dust from the gravel road made it an easy choice to keep the windows up, while in the distance the Rocky Mountains drew ever closer as my son Matthew and I drove ever closer to our destination. A lone sign indicated we were approaching the boat launch and our adventure was about to begin.

One of the great joys in my life is exploring new destinations to go fishing. I, like most people, have my favorite spots, but I make sure to set aside some weekends for adventures to parts unknown.

I never tire of seeing what is around the next bend. New lakes hold a special fascination. What will we find when we get there? How will the fishing be? Will we find lunkers, and, more importantly, will this be a new place to add to my personal "favorite fishing spots"?

I am guessing there are a lot of anglers that share my enthusiasm for finding new places to explore. I think it goes hand in hand for most hard-core anglers. We all dream of finding those hidden gems that few know, let alone fish. If you're like me, you probably have some methods for researching these destinations. If you're new to fishing or exploring new spots I'd like to share some strategies that I've developed to maximize precious time on the road and the water (not to mention gas and travel expenses).

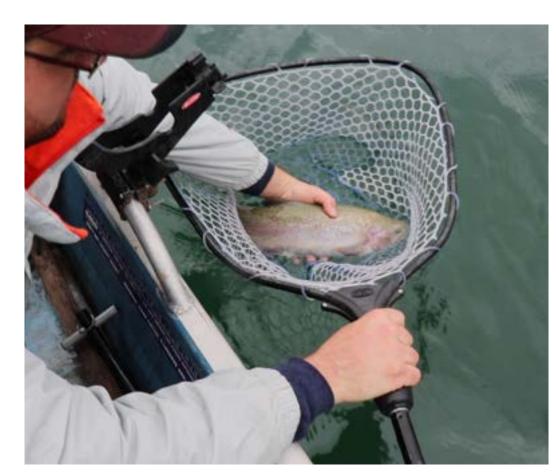
First, how does one find these new fishing locations? In today's age of the internet and social media, it's pretty easy to learn about new spots. While there are those who would never consider revealing locations, others are more open to sharing information. I fall in the latter category. My reasoning is over the vears I've been blessed to learn of new places to fish from other anglers willing to share. I feel it's the least I can do to "pay it forward". Also, my opinion is the more we share locations the more we bring new anglers into our community. In this age of diminishing resources, it may seem counter-intuitive to do this; however, more anglers equal a stronger voice when decisions

affecting fishing are made by fisheries departments. Also, the more locations known to all, the more we spread out and reduce pressures on locations in general. Terminal fisheries will always be crowded, but other "secondary" spots can find relief of pressure as anglers find new spots.

When I first hear of a location I haven't fished before, I will start the self-education process to decide if it's a lake I want to try. The first spot I check is (of course) Northwest Fishing Reports. With over 55,000 fishing reports in our database, it's a good first step to see if others have fished the lake and how they did on it. There may also be maps, Hotspots, and depth charts to download. From there I will branch out



to other areas of research. For that, I use a search engine, usually Google, sometimes Microsoft. Each will give you further information to drill down and explore. After search engines, I'll look to YouTube for videos anglers may have posted. This entire information gathering is part of the fun and as I dive into it, I am forming a decision on devoting a day or weekend to fishing there. One source I have found not very useful is Facebook. In my experience, asking for information on social media just leads to a lot of smart aleck responses and contradictory advice to weed through. Sometimes you may get a glimmer of good information, but honestly, I find other avenues to be more fruitful.



OK, you've found your new location; at first blush it looks like the kind of lake you're looking for. You've researched the fish populations and you're excited by what you found. It's time to drill down to the essential information before you load up your boat and hit the road!

What do I consider essential information and how do I find it?

Since I'm likely fishing with my boat, number one I need to know I can safely get my boat there and launch it. What are the roads like? What about the launch? Does it have a concrete ramp? How about a dock? What about parking?



Besides YouTube videos, the best source to answer these questions is without a doubt the Google maps satellite view. It has been a game changer for me! Any place you want to go you can switch into satellite view and zoom in to see exactly what you can expect when you arrive. I would never go to a new lake without first checking out this resource.

Next on my list is a depth map. This will likely be trickier. You may find a map on the internet to print out if you're lucky. There are other sources. Navionics makes a phone app that has a surprising number of lake map contours in it. The app is reasonably priced. Just be sure to save the image prior to heading out. If you're in a remote location it may not pull up. There is an option to save data to your phone, well worth it. Next, if this is an overnight adventure, are there nearby camping spots or towns that have hotels to stay at? Small towns may only have a couple options to choose from. There's nothing worse than arriving at a town only to find no place to stay.

What to Bring or "Dang, I wish I had brought my kokanee lures"! This one is on you – you're going to presumably a remote location, traveling for an hour or three. Won't you feel silly if you didn't bring the right gear (been there, done that!). This all circles back to our early discussion about knowing what species the lake holds and deciding what you want to target. If you're like me, you have lots of gear for lots of types of fishing. Suppose you get there and discover the kokanee you planned on trolling for really are 6-8" long but guess what, there's a smallmouth fishery for 3-5 pound fish... but you left your bass gear at home. It's that old adage

- be prepared. Maybe throw in a couple bass rods and a tackle box of bass gear, just in case. For Matthew and my adventure, we fished for kokanee and when the wind picked up moved into more sheltered waters and realized the lake had a darn good pike fishery. Unfortunately, we didn't have much in the

Being adaptable to what you find is key to a better fishing trip.

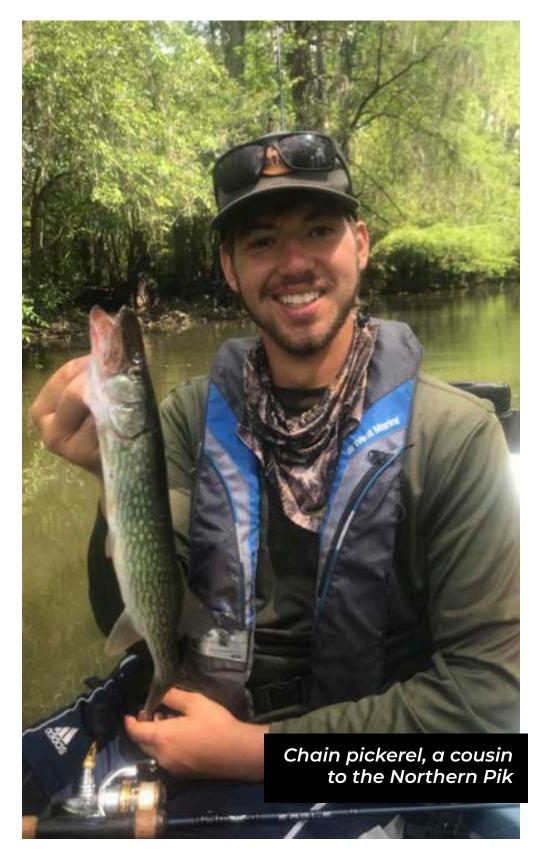
way of pike gear to toss at them. Bottomline, don't have blinders on figuring you're only going to do one type of fishing. I hope the above ideas help in your quest for new and exciting waters to find and fish! I encourage you to share what you find with others and make the fishing world a better place for all of us.

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SMALLMOUTH TACTICS IN A SOUTHERN SWAMP

by Paul Lewis

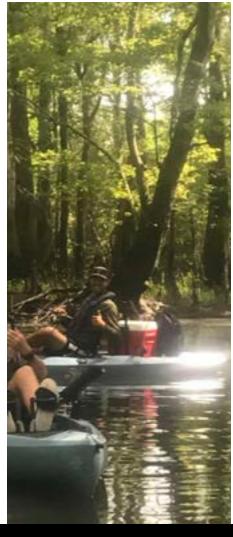


As some of you know, I am blessed with my second line of work

spend time in areas vastly

(aside from guiding) to travel the nation and

different from the Pacific Northwest waters I call home. Currently, I am in Charleston, South Carolina, and being that it is the tail end of spring I have been dying for a spawning Smallmouth bass trip. You know, once in a while we all have the need to practice our Bill Dance, KVD, Mike Ike, Major League Fishing, Backflip out of the boat hookset! Luckily for me, the other day my good buddy Captain Rob from Prawley's Island Beach to Creek Guide Service gave me a call to chase after spawning Bowfin, a prehistoric toothy predator inhabiting the freshwater in the area, so we loaded up the kayaks and headed for the swamp! Bowfin, locally called Mudfish, are a predator who have inhabited the South and Midwest for over 150 million years and in that time there have hardly evolved. Bowfin thrive in water with very low oxygen because of their ability to gulp air and breathe through their swim bladders. From frogs, to small birds, insects, other fish, and any scavenged meat, everything is on the



The "swamp" – a truly unique place to fish!

bowfin's menu. They are truly a killing machine. The only time bowfin aren't on the hunt is during their spawn. At this time, they make beds where the smaller male protects the nest. The female then lays her eggs and leaves. What does that sound like? SPAWNING BASS! So, I headed up with my smallmouth gear and got ready to rip some lips! We started early in the morning covering water to locate the beds. In the swamp, the water clarity was only about 3 inches so to find the fish we

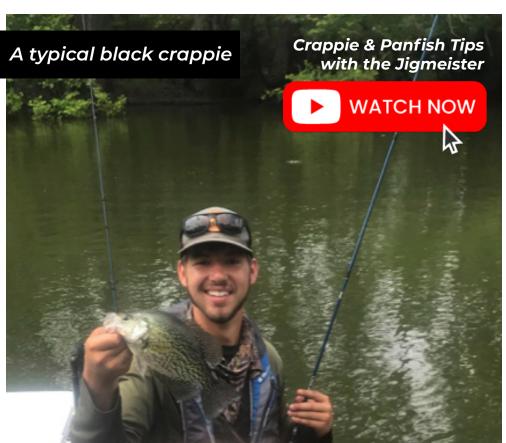


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focused on finding a nice ledge to a flat and casting a bladed-jig or Texas rig and slowly covering water bouncing bottom. Bowfin, like spawning bass, just pick up lures out of the bed to move them off. So. as anglers, we just felt a thump, then knew to set the hook! After missing the first couple hooksets, it was game on, tearing into quality bowfin left and right. Once we found the spawning grounds, we switched gears to a lighter and more finesse approach so we could hold our baits over the beds for a longer time. Everything was working, from drop-shot rigs, Ned rigs, all finesse approaches were hitting. Bowfin are ferocious predators, peeling drag, rolling up in the line, and with their teeth, we lost a few biting through 20 pound fluorocarbon clean.

Comparing smallmouth to bowfin, there were almost too many similarities to count. The way the protect their beds thru circling the outside, and staying off before cleaning it out, it was incredible. At points, we were able to pull the male off the bed to find the larger female, getting both in the boats. One interesting difference in the two species was their habit of spawning so close together. at times, we were fishing right next to each other targeting two different pairs of spawning fish, since the water was so stained, we were able

to use larger line and still stay stealthy. Just like spawning bass, the key was just enough disturbance to annoy the fish without initially startling them off. For such toothy predators, it was surprising to see them act so much like bass, spooking off if you casted right onto them.

After targeting the bowfin, we switched gears to target large panfish and chain pickerel under limbs and hiding in the shade. It was shocking to see 12 and 13 inch warmouth, red ear, and shellcrackers destroying 3 inch crawfish imitations and eating topwater in the heat of the day, truly an epic experience!

Thanks to their hard skulls and soft bites, I really got my fix in full swing hooksets! It was great experience and I can't thank Captain Rob enough for letting me get in my fill of bed fishing even though I am out of town. As anglers, it is always fun to bring tactics from your home waters to a new area and find success. Next up on my plate is chasing striper with salmon tactics, and I hope your next adventure is fishy and filled with learning as well.

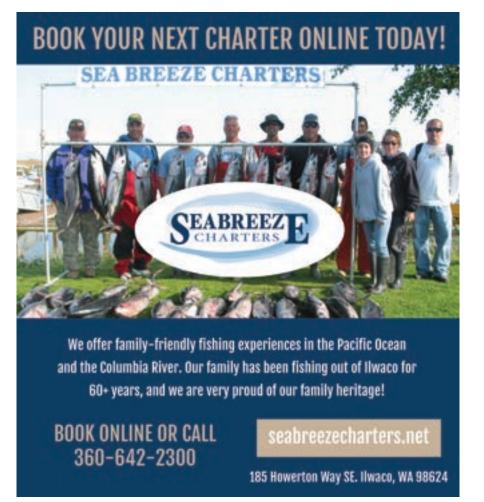
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SUMMERTIME KOKANEE?

by Randy Castello



Summertime Kokanee? With this assignment I found myself asking what do I do different for summertime kokanee? After a brief meshing of gears in my otherwise empty skull I came to the conclusion that generally I don't do anything different. As we are about to explore, I do make some subtle changes to my overall approach.

So you have decided to spend a summer Saturday fishing for kokanee, now what? One of the best ways load the box during the summer is to hit the water early. I'm not talking sitting around having a cup of coffee in your jammies before you leave early. I talking be ready to roll the night before and, on the water, before it gets light early. There are two reasons for this bit of advice. First, kokanee tend to bite best from the predawn until the sun breaks the horizon. If the day is overcast or raining the hot bite period will likely extend but it is not guaranteed.

The other reason to back down the ramp in the dark is that the water-players typically drink at least 2 cups of coffee in their pajamas and get things ready the morning of their adventure; shoot I suspect many get up and say "Dang its hot out, lets hit the water!" then go tubing, wakeboarding or engage in some activity to get wet and make waves on your previously tranquil kokanee lake. Where there is a strong surface bite during the early season it is very short lived as summer progresses. As the predawn light transitions to where are my sunglasses? You have to run your gear deeper to consistently put kokanee in the box. A good sonar is helpful, maybe even necessary during the summer. It will allow you to see either the thermocline or at what depth the kokanee

are schooling at. If you can't see the thermocline don't fret, while kokanee fishing the thermocline is more of a reference than anything. Kokanee will move in and out of their thermal comfort zone in search of their next meal. No fish finder, no problem. Start at about 10' and every ½ hour or so after daylight run your gear 5-10' deeper. Make a mental note capturing what depth you start getting fish and that will be your new sweet spot. When the fish stop biting run the gear another 5-10' deeper and again and again. Well unless your boat limit is already onboard but you get the idea... Summertime kokanee gear is basically the same as your winter, spring, fall, full moon, hmmm... I've got the day off and going fishing kokanee gear. That said, during the summer I tend to run shorter leaders and longer setbacks. I have also noticed that when fishing Westside kokanee small spinner blades seem to have an edge. As with any other time of the year or time of the day for that matter, color can be important. Always hit the lake with an assortment of various color lures. The color of the day can change by the hour and often does during the summer. Speaking about color; I typically run Poulsen Arrow Flash dodgers but whether you are running dodgers, swing blades or even some form of pop-gear consider the color. During the summer



once the sun is up metallic colors will have the edge. Ok, now we are going to get controversial. Scent or no scent? Now that I have completed a 12-step scenta-holics program I can comfortably talk about it. I used to carry a small lunch box size ice chest full of scent bottles every time I went kokanee fishing. I used to log my success by season, time of day, weather, lake and lure type. The data was eyeopening, it turns out that it didn't make much difference. Combine that with the fact that I am generally lazy, I stopped adding scents to my kokanee offering. I do use tuna corn as my base and may or may not add a Carp Spit or garlic version to any day's arsenal. Summertime kokanee are also partial to a real maggot or small bit of worm or nightcrawler. When I say bit I am talking less than ¼ inch of your ground dwelling friend. Kept out of the sun one large worm or small nightcrawler can last all day. Speaking of; keep your worm out of the sun and if you must use scents keep them cool in the shade or under a damp towel. Care of your catch is important all year and critical during the summer.

Do not drag your summer

kokanee around the lake on a stinger. After a few minutes your prize catch will not be edible. Summertime surface temperatures can reach 75 degrees and at that temperature it doesn't take long for the meat to break down. A small cooler ½ filled with ice and water, or better yet; ice, water and a handful of salt will keep your kokanee in prime condition. During the summer it is very important to bleed your kokanee. You can use a scissors or just use your finger to break a gill raker then throw it in the cooler. All will be good and when you get home your kokanee will be in prime condition. I love summer kokanee. OK, to be honest I love fishing for kokanee any time of the year but summer kokanee and I have a thing. Anytime you can catch kokanee while wearing flip-flops is good! When fishing for summer kokanee hit the lake early and be prepared to change gear as required. Consider adding maggots, worm or nightcrawler to your standard corn offerings. Assuming that the kokanee gods have treated you well, honor them by assuring that your catch remains in top condition. Make sure that you take care of and ice your fish immediately after you catch them.





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THE WASHINGTON OUTDOORS REPORT

by John Kruse

How to Really Pre-Fish a Lake!



I was lucky enough to spend a week in Fort Worth, Texas this month covering the Bassmaster Classic, an annual event put on by B.A.S.S. called the "Super Bowl of Bass Fishing". This year's threeday tournament took place at Lake Ray Roberts, a reservoir built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the 1980's. The lake, with over 29,000 acres of water, has brush piles in the deep water for habitat and closer to shore, dead trees and tree stumps. The shore itself is bare in some places but most of the shoreline is surrounded by trees or brush.

The 54 anglers fishing the Bassmaster Classic were allowed three days to pre-fish this lake. This time was important, since no major tournaments had been held here before by B.A.S.S. and most of the anglers had never fished this body of water before.

So, how does a tournament angler break down a lake and figure out where the fish are and what they'll bite? I got to find out when I spent the final practice day on the boat with Chris Johnston, a resident of Ontario, Canada who fishes the Bassmaster Elite Series for a living.

Johnston told me on his first practice day he quickly determined the bass were not off shore in deep water as many expected. Instead, because of unusually high water in the lake, the bass were hanging out close to shore in cover.

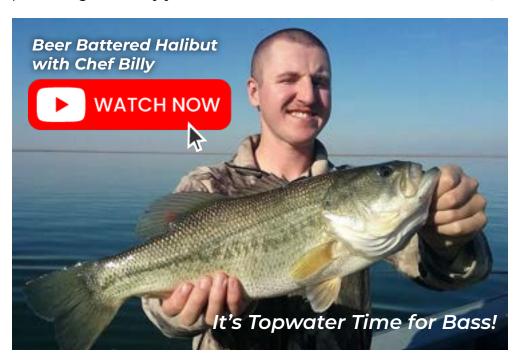
Next, Johnston had to figure out what kind of cover the largemouth bass preferred. He found it wasn't the dead trees, flooded grass or small trees that held most of the bass. Instead, it was the freshly flooded green leafy bushes, which were thick on top but bare below, that provided the bass both cover from predators and shade from the bright Texas sun.

With this knowledge in hand. Johnston set out to fish as much of the lake as he could over the next two days where this grassy brush was found. Starting out on the final practice morning, I sat in the back of Johnston's boat and watched him flip a lure into the brush, covering an entire bay for an hour and a half without a bite. When asked if this depressed him. he smiled and replied, "Oh no. We just eliminated an area I don't need to fish during the tournament."



We headed to another part of the lake and Johnston began flipping his lure into the green brush again near shore. In a 25-yard stretch Johnston got bit by bass five times in just a few minutes. Johnston marked this location as a waypoint on the map on his bowmounted fish finder and explained this was a "high percentage area", a place he could quickly race into, fish, and then leave for the next "high percentage area." Over the course of the day Johnston found four of these key areas he was looking for to fish during the tournament. Johnston said his goal was to find close to 40 of these high percentage areas during his practice days.

There are two key things to remember if you are going to pre-fish like this. First of all, this tactic works best when conditions are stable. If a major cold front or storm comes in, where the fish are and how they behave can change. Likewise, it's hard to cover an entire lake to eliminate the marginal areas and find all the high percentage areas by yourself. Johnston was fortunate his brother,



Corey Johnston, was also fishing this tournament and the two essentially split up the lake and shared the prefishing information they learned with each other. Last but not least, it's important not to hook the fish you find while pre-fishing. As Chris Johnston explained, nobody wants to win the pre-fishing event by catching a whole bunch of bass because that is a surefire way to have a poor tournament performance.

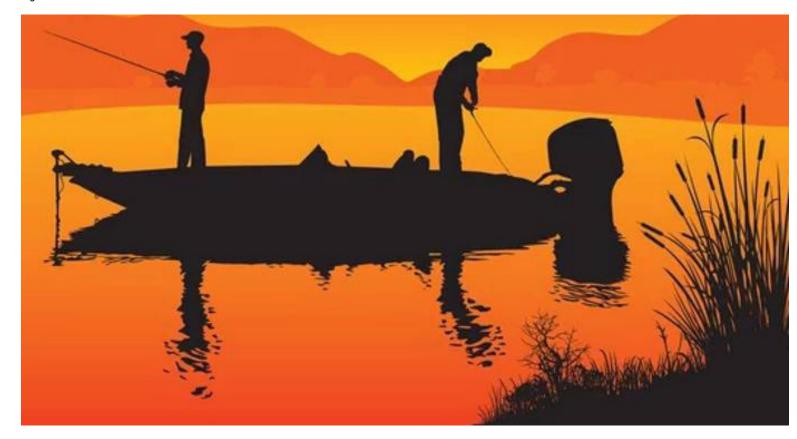
The reason? Those bass might leave the area you hooked them in. Even if they don't leave, they will likely not bite anything again for up to three days and when they do bite, it probably won't be on the same lure you hooked them on the first time. Bass may not be the smartest fish in the water, but they are smart enough to learn. That's why Johnston fished on the last two practice days with a soft plastic lure and weight with no hook. With the bites he got, Johnston would try to figure out the size of the fish biting based on the weight of the pull on his rod. Needless to say, when he got into what he thought was a big one, that became a prioritized place to return to.

In the end, Johnston's prefishing went very well. He finished in the top tier of anglers every day of the competition and ended up in 8th place, catching just over 40 pounds of bass and earning a \$21,000 paycheck for his efforts at the Bassmaster Classic.

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MY TOP FIVE SUMMERTIME BASS TECHNIQUES

by Rick Lawrence



If there is one thing that comes to mind about my love of summertime fishing, it's TOPWATER BABY!!!!

That will be the first tactic I will cover here, but first some general info that will help you find summertime fish.

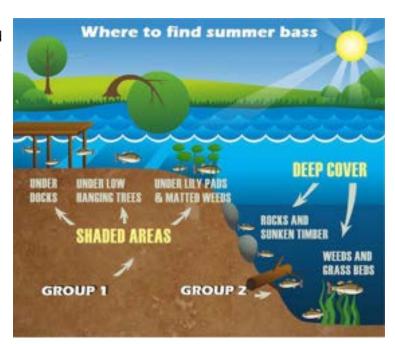
One thing you have to remember is after the spawn is over bass in most lakes will move off the beds and join 1 of 2 distinctly different groups. You have a group of fish that will stay shallow in the backs of the bays all summer long and they will key in on any heavy cover along the shore they can find. That may be down trees, stumps, overhanging grass, lily pads, docks or any number of other types of cover they can find that will give them protection from the sun and predators, but also provide cover to ambush prey. The majority of these fish are the males as they hang around longer then the big female to protect the fry in their nests. When they get done with that they will move to the first available good cover spot that is in less than 4 feet of water.

The other group is comprised mainly of the larger females. They will generally move out to the first good point in 8 to 12 feet of water they can find. They will still look for some kind of structure though, for protection from the sun and that will provide a good ambush point as well. This group of fish will be more scattered and harder to find then the shallow group most of the time. So without farther to-do here are my top 5 favorite summer bass techniques.

1. Early Morning Topwater

The span of time between dawn and 9am is primetime for topwater in the shallows and shorelines as well as from about 8 pm till dark and even up to an hour after dark, as even some of the big females will move in during these low light conditions to feed. There's generally more food in the shallows, so when these areas aren't getting bombarded by the sun bass move in to hunt. The low light conditions and calm water make it the optimal time for topwater lures.

This is when choppers, poppers, and walk-the-dog lures will get tons of action, but really all topwater baits are on the table at this point. One of my favorite lures is the Buzztoad like the Zoom Hornytoad. Running them tight to cover is ideal but during the early morning hours open water can also be as effective. Cast them as close to shore as possible and work them towards deeper water or parallel to the shoreline. My other favorite store bought bait is a plopper style bait. I make a couple topwater baits of my own design that are killer baits as well, one is a floating buzzbait and the other is a floating mouse bait that has a cool side to side action.





2. Sinking Stick Baits

Fishing deadstick type baits around heavy cover can be one of the most productive ways to catch summer bass. Heavy salt baits like The Sink-N-Fool that I invented are ideal to skip under docks or into heavy cover. They are lethal on summer bass in the shallows, as are some of the other sinking worm style baits. This kind of bait is a do nothing bait that you just cast it to what looks like a prime spot and let the bait fall on a semi slack line. This is a technique you really need to watch your line as it will move away from you rapidly about 6' when a bass sucks in the bait and that's your signal to set the hook. If you are fishing a hard bottom you can let the bait just sit on the bottom for up to a minute or so and the fish will come pick it up.

3. Banging Cover With Deep Diving Crankbaits

In lakes with deep water, bass will find protection from the sun and cooler water in the depths. This is when a fish finder is extremely useful for finding areas to target. You need to be able to see the bottom to know what the structure is like and where cover is located. Bass hold to deep structure and cover as a means to ambush prey, so running deep diving crankbaits through those areas can get a lot of bites. A good rule of thumb is to use a crankbait that will dive deep enough to hit bottom so if the water is say 8 to 9 feet deep use a DT10 or other bait that has a similar diving depth. I like to use baits that dive at least 2 feet deeper than the water you are fishing. If I'm fishing in water 15 to 18 feet I go with the Live Target deep craw. This is a amazing bait that unfortunately they don't make anymore.



Unfortunately without electronics you're fishing somewhat blind in deeper waters, but you can still make a good estimate on where to cast by targeting the drop offs. Head from the shallows towards deeper water while watching the bottom, when the bottom disappears from view make casts out deep and use your crankbait to tell you how deep the water is. Start with a smaller lipped crankbait and keep increasing the size of the lip until the bait hits the bottom. If it's a sandy, gravel or rock bottom then it's a good technique to crash against it. If there's grass or other weeds then you can revert back to the previous lip size and run the bait just above the bottom.

4. Throwing Blades

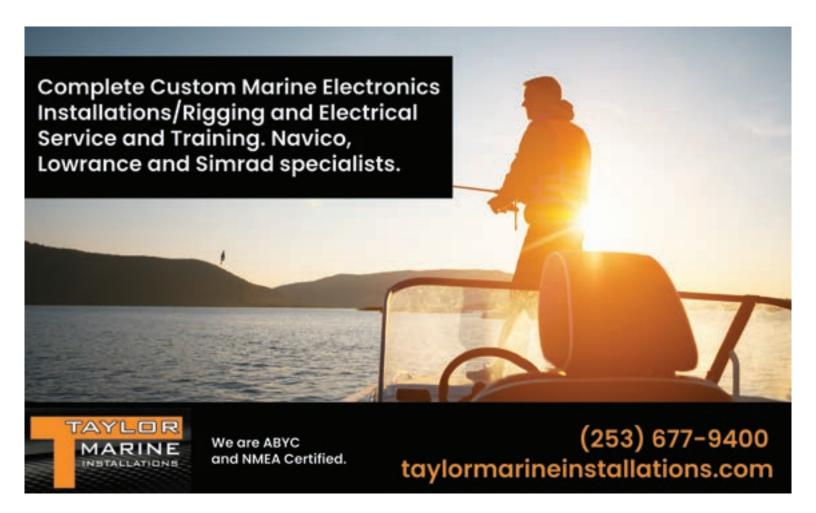
Spinnerbaits are a perfect search lure for bass. You can cover a lot of water to locate fish. They replicate baitfish swimming across the water while utilizing both vibration and flash to attract bass from a distance. They come in a variety of designs, blades, body sizes, and allow for the use of trailers. This large versatility allows anglers to fish deep in the water column or right at the surface.

However, they are most popular as a shallow water lure, where they can be pulled through a variety of vegetation with success. Their loud and shiny presentation is especially enticing to bass that are opportunistic feeders. If fish aren't biting or are short striking, a great technique can be to also add a flashy trailer with a trailer hook. Many times adding a trailer with a hook in it has upped my catch rate by 90%.

5. Punching Bags

Punching is basically when you plunge a lure through the surface of heavy matted weeds to get to the fish hiding out below, a highly effective summer bass fishing tactic. Not only do the thick matted weeds provide a shield from the sun, they also oxygenate the water and hold plenty of food. They're loaded with baitfish and crayfish that make ideal meals for a bass. Essentially all you're doing is making the bait break through the surface weeds and sink quickly to the bottom. This is best done by flipping and pitching, a casting technique where you softly swing-cast lures at close targets.

I like to use a Jika rig for this with a casting weight and either a creature bait or texas rigged worm on it. When a punch rig comes darting down through these thick weeded areas, bass in most cases take it for a baitfish heading for cover. This usually draws a reaction strike so be ready to set the hook. This technique takes some getting used to, so stick with it. Once you find success with it you'll be hooked.





KOKANEE FISH TACOS? You have got to be kidding!



by Randy Castello

I am not, I have two ways that I make kokanee fish tacos. I may have had a recipe at some point but over the years and after having made hundreds of fish tacos they just come to be. One of my favorite foods is street tacos and both the following recipes are simple, delicious and you eat them with your fingers, in my mind a requirement for any street food. My preference is to eat them on warm corn tortillas but warm flour tortillas works just as well. If you have cast-iron, now is the time to break it out. With the even heat distribution cast-iron is ideal for both the cooking the fish and warming the tortillas (no microwave here!). Use a tortilla warmer for table service and keep the cooked fish in a 200 degree oven until just before serving. Serve both styles with the chipotle fish taco sauce, tomatillo salsa and shredded cabbage. As with many foods, kokanee tacos should be served with cerveza and a room full of friends.

KOKANEE FISH TACOS



Chipotle Fish Taco Sauce

Ingredients

½ cup sour cream½ cup Mayonnaise½-1 lime squeezed for juice

A couple Tbls of sauce from a can of chipotle peppers or a dab from a tube of chipotle paste

Directions

Combine the sour cream, mayo, lime juice and whisk until smooth. Whisk in sauce from can of chipotle peppers or a dab from a tube of chipotle paste to your liking. The chipotle sauce can be omitted for white meat fish tacos.

Tomatillo Salsa

Ingredients

6 tomatillos 1 poblano pepper 1 Jalapeno pepper 1/2 finely diced yellow onion 1/2 cup chopped Cilantro 1 lime squeezed for juice Kosher salt to taste

Directions

Peel and quarter tomatillos. Stem, seed and coarsely chop Poblano and Jalapeno peppers. Add tomatillos, peppers and cilantro to blender and blend until it is a course liquid. Transfer to small sauce pan and bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 5 minutes to blend flavors. Remove from



heat and completely cool. Once cool, transfer back to the blender, add onion, lime juice and kosher salt to taste. Then pulse blend to combine. Transfer to serving bowl.

INSTRUCTIONS

Fish-Baja Style

Ingredients

2-10 Kokanee, filleted and cut into ½ inch wide strips 1 Cup of all-purpose flour 1 Egg 1 Tbsp Dijon mustard ¾-1 Cup of beer Oil for frying Tortillas

Directions

Preheat ½ inch of oil over medium heat until surface of the oil is rippling. While the oil is preheating in a bowl, wisk together flour, egg, Dijon mustard and beer until smooth and well blended. Coat sliced fish one at a time with batter and place in hot oil turning once until golden brown. Continue cooking fish in small batches until all fish is cooked. When fish is golden brown transfer to a rack or paper towel lined glass serving dish and keep in 200 degree oven until all the fish is

Fish Tacos-Rseas style

(easy-peasy)

Ingredients

2 Kokanee, filleted and cut into 1" wide strips Lard, oil or butter for sautéing A Mexican seasoning salt (Pico Mariscos or something similar) Tortillas

Directions

Sprinkle seasoning salt over cut-up kokanee, toss and set aside. Over medium heat oil until it is hot but not smoking. Add seasoned fish and stir-fry just until fish is opaque. Only takes a minute or so, do not overcook. Serve as noted above.

Dam, now I'm hungry.



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