

## You Don't Use Flavours - But You DO! (Even If You Don't Realise It!)

Every bait ingredient, additive, etc you put into your bait has molecules in the parts per million or possibly in parts per billion that carp can detect, so it's no good saying your 'neutral bait' has no flavour; even rubber and plastic or foam baits that are supposed to be inert can be smelled by us humans and our senses are tiny compared to fish!

If you use bait flavours then you will know that some are in a different league to others and the right or wrong fishing flavours really can mean the difference between huge success and dramatic failure! Even the amazingly effective 'Scopex' has failed to produce on some waters, as have milk protein baits... Proprietary fishing flavours have evolved a fair bit over the years but some of the original big names are still at the top. Cranberry, pineapple and mulberry were there all along, but less anglers knew about them in the past. (How fishing fashions change!) Thousands of baits from boilies to pellets, meats and fish cut baits to ground baits, dough baits to pastes and seed and nut baits, can all be enhanced or differentiated further by using flavours.

Many flavours stimulate fish search and investigation behaviour but far fewer truly trigger actual fish feeding. This is a very important distinction. Various powerful natural non-amino acids in a flavour are also very significant in fish response effects among other possible compounds, spice and herb extracts, phenols, terpenes, oleoresins, salts, lignin extracts etc.

The lines are definitely blurred with fishing flavours and these are now extremely complex with vast lists of components. Some synthetic flavours may have 100 individual components, while a natural flavour may have 50 or more compounds present, 25 volatile ones and even others which remain unidentified at the present time. If 'authenticity' is important to you this is a tricky business with flavours. Most anglers just care that their flavours catch fish, not how many carcinogenic or possibly toxic compounds might be present in their flavours. But then again probably the majority of fishermen smoke or drink, and toxins are certainly involved in these. (Pure nicotine is even more toxic than cyanide, but in very insignificant levels is actually stimulatory to carp for instance!)

Words like 'pure' and 'absolute' do not describe the same 'naturally derived flavour' label; a flavour with a common name can be utterly different in components and potential bioactivity to another. A pure flavour may be 90 percent flavour with 10 percent solvent, (for instance, ethanol alcohol.) The divide between natural flavours and synthetic ones can be hard to judge when trying to make a guided ethical choice. Many flavours may have insignificant fish stimulating value nutritionally, but natural extract flavours can contain powerful compounds and components which the fish will certainly detect, for example such things as phytoestrogens, oleoresins, phenols, bioflavonoids and terpenes. Nerve site 'potentiators' are being used in significant amounts as are 'relatives' of neurotransmitter precursors and a host of very powerful and complex compounds many inducing a 'feel &ndash; good' factor in fish.

Cocaine is one extreme example where a plant (Cannabis species) can produce a substance which feels good to some animals; changing brain chemistry and activity, but can also kill! Hemp seeds are different because they only contain trace levels of brain altering substances. However this includes traces of the psychoactive component of marijuana (THC or delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol.) Cannabinols are proven to be effective to treat certain diseases in humans and may be beneficial in some ways to fish but in what levels, who know? However, I've no proof they or similar types of compounds are not used in some flavours...

Nutritional stimulation is really mostly the purpose of your bait base mix anyway but a good flavour really can boost of fish to your bait and how the fish beneficially associates that flavour with your bait. Aniseed oil is a prime example as it holds fish in the area of bait significantly longer than many attractors. The best way to test flavours for fishing is to test them. Many companies have field testers doing this for you and prove their reliability, but there is lots you can do to vary commercial flavours from the most popular 'straight' versions which have been previously successful on your waters.

Fishing bait companies make many claims about their flavours, base mixes, boilies and pellets etc. Many claims are absolutely true, if not understated! But there are some flavours whose performance does not match the words written to promote them. Often with fishing flavours, the most expensive ones are the ones to be trusted and relied upon to produce fish and even the occasional bonus fish in colder temperatures and when conditions are about as far from ideal as can be. Personal fishing flavors testing results are the only genuine guide to effectiveness. Confidence with flavours comes mostly from personal experience of using flavours against each other over time, in all the seasons and numerous waters and against other fishermen's baits!

This is why personal favourites differ from angler to angler...

Personal recommendations of flavours from the most experienced fishermen are well worth recording. Sometimes it's worth blending 2 or more extremely successful flavours together. Even Rod Hutchinson blended his incredible 'Scopex' flavour with his awesome 'Chocolate malt' flavour. (Each has proven as good in winter as in summer.) Making homemade baits with innovative blended flavours to get an edge can be as simple as pouring one bottle of 'Tutti Fruitti' flavour into another bottle of another company's version of the same 'named' flavour and shaking this thoroughly. You can hit upon a combination that is a significant edge for you personally for years to come!

The author has many more fishing and bait 'edges' up his sleeve. Every single one can have a huge impact on catches. (Warning: This article is protected by copyright.)

By Tim Richardson.

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