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## Vital Winter And Spring Carp Fishing Bait Tips To Improve Your Catches Now!

If you want to avoid as many disappointing blank cold water fishing sessions as possible then now is the time to make the most of alternative bait and rig tactics that really pull fish to your hook baits even more effectively than usual &ndash; read on now and catch more cold water fish!

The small lake outside my kitchen window about to freeze over this winter - again - but a useful time to experiment with baits for such conditions!

Water density is a very interesting thing because around the point of freezing, water density changes. This makes the formation of ice and thawing out of lakes quite an exciting time because carp respond to the water density changes. It is well known for carp to break the rules of anglers' incorrect expectations and many winter carp get caught right at the points and locations in lakes where active icing over and defrosting is taking place. It may be cold but the water density is very often the more important factor in fish feeding behaviour!

When winter and spring water temperatures struggle to get above 3 to 6 degrees, for example, it can be really tough to get bites. Part of the problem is achieving the correct, most suitable concentration of stimulating signals pumping from your baits to the fish to actually make them aware of the potential food source nearby, that is actually worth the energy expenditure, or even in regards to the possible digestion of bait in such conditions!

Consider that maggots will slow down their movements pretty quickly and will have already dumped their initial burst of excreted ammonia and amino acids etc into the water upon their initial introduction - leaving little to attract fish onwards! It is no surprise that most often concentrated pastes will out-fish boilies, pellets and live baits after initial introduction. It shocks me when I read about people like Ian Chilcott talking about having to go onto maggots in cold water conditions from his favourite readymade boilies; he just needs to understand more about bait formats and substances and how they work in different ways in solution, and in regards to fish external and internal systems. Maggots are far from being the automatic or best solution.

All too many carp anglers, especially those of the instant angler-readymade bait culture, often through no fault of their own, are stuck in a limited mindset of popularised paradigms of what carp baits are and how to use them. For example, the average carp angler will expect to see yellow pineapple boilies, Day-Glow pink shrimp boilies, yellow chocolate malt boilies or red fish boilies. But just because you don't see many readymade black Scopex and banana or pineapple baits does not mean they are not highly effective! To me, colour is one of the lesser considerations in bait. Most readymade baits are under-optimised in terms of natural-stimulation concentration and release, so it is no surprise it appears that sight-feeding carp prefer lighter tones of boilies. But how many anglers have overlooked the fact that halibut marine-type

pellets are very dark, yet famously effective - with zero glow-in-the-dark gimmickry!

The fact is there are no hard and fast rules to getting hooks into the mouths of carp using bait leverage - because carp are constantly adapting individuals, programmed to survive, using any adaptation techniques they can, including monopolising new food sources, avoiding hard, highly flavoured, or more familiar round, barrel or pellet-shaped baits and all too familiar baiting situations and swim activity. We need to keep a constantly changing, open mind to be consistently successful anglers. Do not be lazy in your thinking, looking for instant and quick fixes that just do not last!

In winter and spring fishing, many carp anglers are unaware that you can fish with alternative soluble baits that remain intact for significant lengths of time, and can even be adapted to last longer with unique effects. It seems to me that the average guy on the bank expects his readymade bait to last intact on a rig at least 12 to 36 hours, or even longer. But to me, if a bait only lasts about 4 hours' immersion in very cold water, then this is absolutely ideal, as it means the bait is actually effectively dispersing/pumping itself into the water - to maximum effect! You do not always want to 'play it safe' and wrap a readymade bait in paste, using one of a pretty limited number of very similar hair rigs, and pretty standard hook link lengths and materials - all of which are retrain carp to be cautious every time they are used.

But I have caught enough big, wary winter and spring fish using paste (directly on the hook without any hair rig) to know it can out-fish pellets and boilies and maggots on hair rigs - for one thing because fish are simply never expecting this approach! Of course, I do things with my hook link to make certain the hook point is long enough and thin enough and angled just right for maximum immediate penetration upon contact. I manually sharpen my hooks sharper than any chemically-sharpened hook on the market today; but then for me, it is those critical first 4 millimetres of hook point that matter most in fishing.

For the past 5 years, I have had a significant amount of time away from carp fishing, while researching my ebooks and related ebooks, and been focusing on river fishing. I have done this for various personal reasons, but it has given me a much a fresher perspective on carp fishing baits and baiting applications, and also creativity in solving problems by doing this! The moving water in the river strips concentrations of leaching substances from baits very quickly, just as it does when using worms in beach fishing; the first 15 minutes are the peak time, when the highest concentration of naturally attractive substances and feeding triggers are dispersing into the water currents.

Due to changes in water densities and other factors in rivers, winter baits need special properties if they are to be far more productive than usual but this is not limited just to using extra-soluble substances but also relates to others aspects such as substances that carp most easily detect in very low concentrations, as well as things like special substances that will provide a sudden behavioural change or metabolic or energy-boost when detected - even in low doses. Certain flavour components and combinations will do this just on their own, while bait additives and ingredients add to this effect in many ways for longer durations, with better leaching and attraction and stimulation properties.

Extremely effective cold water baits are basically 2-way pumps that take in water that replaces bait substances within the bait, and in this exchange, pump out stimulation and attraction substances in concentrations that fish easily detect in the water solution contacting them (even at range). Ionic exchange is central to much of this, although certainly not limited to it, as this is only one way baits operate in water and on fish senses. The way substances trigger carp receptors in

different places on and in the body are also an important part of the success equation, but how a bait impacts all senses simultaneously or just one aspect can be a key to success also. Well over 90 percent of all readymade baits are not optimised and maximised to achieve these effects, so the ionic exchange and hence the impact of the bait components on the water is not great, due to design and profitability constraints, and also angler expectations of how the bait will behave in the water.

But of course the homemade bait maker, doing things on a smaller scale, has no such restrictions and can choose substances to significantly boost the bait's properties, for maximum impact and effect!

For instance, when I am sensing and assessing a bait or new potential bait substance (or substances in combination - some substances get active or change their chemical structure and are much more noticeable when combined), for me it is not about a tongue taste or a combined nose or tongue impact that is important - but a deep gut reaction. Some substances are almost invisible to the senses when used on their own but in combinations with others can be made far more active or potent in impact and effect. For instance, certain flavours and sugars have little effect on carp responses but when used in synergistic ways they can make all the difference to your success!

There are in fact very many tricks, tactics, methods etc to achieve improved fish responses in colder water, and conversely in warmer water, in terms of bait designs and their modes of action, fishing styles, ground bait and other free bait characteristics, and how they are applied. Very many baits can actually be made on the bank - all you need are your ready-prepared base mixes and liquids - and such made-on-the-bank baits have actually caught me big carp, where the cold conditions have failed to produce fish on boilies and even on live baits such as maggots!

Very viscous and extremely soluble substances are very useful in cold conditions. Although it may sound strange but some substances that are 99 percent insoluble are also very useful in achieving bites, most especially if they are emulsified or partly emulsified using liquid lecithins. Glycerol or glycerine is a very useful substance because it mixes with water in effect 100 percent, and many successful flavours are based on it. Alcohol flavours too are highly water soluble so will travel easily from your bait, so forming a concentration gradient that carp can home in on. Personally, I find mixing glycerol and alcohol-based flavours with ones primarily natural ester-based or others, natural or nature-identical, or diacetin types, are very successful.

You can even boost a propylene glycol based flavour by cutting it with vodka and natural raspberry puree, and a probiotic agent such as marmite, very rich in taste-enhancing factors for instance, and adding talin as an electrostatic carrier, to produce a very unique homemade flavour! I have been doing this kind of experimentation for my baits, both homemade and readymade, since the 70s - because it works.

But of course concentrated flavours are not the only useful substances; and some substances can be too soluble and actually leach out of baits too fast as they have infinite solubility, as in the case of glycerol dominated flavours, for example. It is wise to try mixing flavours and other substances so your flavours all leach out at different rates, leaving some concentrated attraction in the proximity of the bait. Using pure glycerine, vodka, and a mixture of concentrated sweetener and molasses and marmite, soluble fish protein and lactose, for instance, is a little bit alternative and produces different effects and impacts at different ranges.

For an easy homemade method or stick-type mixes, just make a breadcrumb based fluffy mixture dampened with your unique liquids to produce a ground bait mixture that will disperse easily, releasing soluble attraction and food particles into the water column and attract carp like mad! Using anything, from hemp oil to olive oil, and fruit oils etc in your mix, will get particles to pull fish down from upper layers better as the oil will tend to rise in water.

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An easy way to make an alternative, highly over-flavoured area for winter fishing is to mix breadcrumbs with the old favourite Nesquik powdered milk shake. I really like using extra sweetened oils of many forms, provided they are mixed with liquid lecithins, but I advise you to avoid bulk fish and marine oils that simply solidify in low temperatures - test in the fridge or outside overnight using a thermometer if you are unsure. While actually fishing and testing oils, I have found a thermometer placed in oils in a pot in the water is quite enlightening!

Fruit oils are quite easily available online, and you do not always have to go to fishing bait companies for something slightly different or alternative &ndash; after all, that is one of the greatest proven edges in carp fishing! With your oils, I recommend using the high PC liquid lecithin from Phil at CW Baits (online.)

The winter and spring test paste bait pictured contains a high level of long-range attractors that stimulate protein-orientated feeding, plus it contains hemp oil and highly water-soluble additives and ingredients. In the test glass here, it is breaking down in an hour, releasing a potent red (and also clear) halo of attraction and stimulation for fish to easily home in on when used when fished!

This homemade bait formulation can turn the water to a suspension of semi and fully water-soluble attraction to seriously stimulate feeding!

Using oils in PVA products such as PVA bag and PVA netting etc lessens the chances of your PVA melting. If in doubt try some of the PVA-friendly products available from bait companies, such as CC Moore who have designed their products with this feature beneficially in mind.

In really low winter temperatures, solubility really is a great factor that can be leveraged, and in such conditions it is often pointless using a conventional boiled bait coated in paste, when you can use paste on the rig and know every part of your bait really is working for you (and is not rendered ineffective due to being sealed inside coagulated protein formed by heating of the bait!)

I will not go into which bait products to use here because there are so many excellent ones for winter and spring fishing to choose from but one key aspect in choosing substance is how well they will disperse in water - and most especially in cold water! To find this out just get samples and mix them with cold water. In a way it is like testing salt against betaine crystals or whole milk powders against various caseins, semolina or maize flour - or against malt extract, for instance.

Just one example of a really good winter trick is to make a paste using CC Moore Feedstim XP Liquid, their Feedstim XP powder, their Belachan powder, pure betaine and liquid Red Venom, stiffened with good old wholemeal wheat flour. Notice that no egg is used in this paste as you might in making boilies, as this bait can be as water-soluble as you like and will last longer in very low winter temperatures!

If you want a more resilient paste (or make different homemade boilies), just add a small proportion of whole egg powder in your powder mixture or even use whey gel, if you are into that kind of bait texture and feel and effect etc. Ultimately, you can make baits that do not need to be sealed by loads and loads of whole liquid egg, and if you use egg, one tip is to reduce its content in baits by adding water in the same volume as half the eggs you might normally use in a summer bait, for example.

It is a little known fact that winter carp baits do not require a protein content of even 30 percent to be very effective indeed. In fact, anyone who is a little snobbish about using a winter bait based on breadcrumbs needs to make some homemade baits with them, adding some liquid foods, perhaps some flavour components, and highly soluble protein extracts (in high levels) as you would for a more costlier boilie recipes, and use these baits as paste &ndash; with total confidence!

A great little tip I have used with lots of success in low temperature conditions is to add next to a paste, or steamed or boiled bait, a piece of luncheon meat soaked in a neat essential oil (or mixtures of oils, palatants, enhancers, liquid proteins, flavours etc). The cheaper brands of luncheon meat tend to contain less protein, less fat and more water, and are quite water soluble - which is very useful in winter time!

High PC liquid lecithin is an essential component of cold water baits for me - as a proven feeding trigger - as it emulsifies oils and improves bait digestion and substance hydration and dispersal, among other benefits!

The meat eventually softens and provides another very attractive reason for Mr Carp to suck in your rig! When you provide carp with a rig that has an odd-shaped meat bait and an odd-shaped different homemade boiled or steamed bait, it can give you an edge, if only because this is not a standard bait presentation &ndash; and it really does work for big, wary fish!

A snow fall in March need not be a bad sign - with the right bait!

Even if you decide to use very cheap budget-type bait mixes, I advise you to exploit bait as a carrier for feed-triggering substances to improve the effects of your added bait. Maybe go for a more unusual combination, such as Eurobaits Maggot Juice additive, with added SBS Flavatract enhancer, and CC Moore green-lipped mussel or Belachan Ultra Essence flavours for instance?!

In making a ground bait for winter and spring use, why not investigate the multitudes of substances available? Do not simply use those in favour in the adverts right now. For instance, try using pistachio flavour or hazelnut flavour with a ground bait mix (spod, stick, method, slop mixes etc), incorporating chopped and crushed brazil nuts, hazelnuts, walnuts and pinenuts, plus sesame seeds and pumpkin seeds, all freshly crushed.

Such a bait can avoid all those more familiar things like tiger nuts, peanut meal, crushed hemp, and familiar flavours and additives etc like Scopex or Chocolate Malt, chilli, L030, Minamino and so on. An alternative example of a liquid food is a 50:50 mixture of CC Moore liquid Mussel Extract and CC Moore Liquid Betaine, or a 50:50 mixture of CC Moore liquid Super Slop and CC Moore Feedstim XP, with added CC Moore Ultra Sweet taste enhancing sweetener. All this kind of thing is an aspect of bait I am very keen on linking with regards to finer details of fish sensitivities with very good reason, because offering alternative nutritionally-stimulating palatabilities really works!

Naturally, I have my own favourite versions I keep to myself but I am finding new combinations all the time, some of which I have not had time to use yet. However, literally anyone can create their own unique mixes that wary fish will never have experienced ever before! Believe me when I say you do not have to use the en vogue Banana, fish or Chocolate Malt creations - stay ahead of the fish (and competing baits) by creating your own unique versions. Remember that fish do not interpret flavours like you - your mind-mapping and coding of flavours is different to fish, and fish are flavour-specific anyway.

We adult humans code for 10,000 to 12,000 flavours but it is likely fish do not perceive a strawberry flavour like us, as their brains are wired in many different ways for a start. Think about it; fish receive information from specialised cells on their body surfaces such as their lateral lines, fins, lips, face and in the gills, as well as internally in the mouth and throat etc. All this information is fed to the brain and combined in the brain in various different ways to humans - so causing a biofeedback loop that initiates feeding or rejection responses and different levels of excitement and various modes of behaviours, etc.

Even well-known anglers may say that carp enjoy the crunch factor of tiger nut meal in a bait, but not know it is not the texture alone that matters. Sure, the texture creates vibrations and sounds that are stimulating, and promotes passage of food through the gut, but many other vital things matter even more. Just like, for example, the primary essential amino lysine present in tiger nuts, that the fish will detect, or the vital energy-boosting profile of the oils in digestible tiger nuts, and the metabolism-boosting and thermochemical heating factors present that boost rates of digestion. Plus the forms of natural sugars that enhance tastes and flavours etc, and also provide an addictive instant energy boost! Look up tiger nuts or Chufas and you will see these are not nuts at all (why not see what these are related to for more clues as to why they are so effective. I have a 4-year diploma in horticulture which is an edge in this, but this stuff is all on the web or in university libraries etc!)

The last thing a carp will associate with strawberry or banana concentrated bait flavour (even if natural or nature-identical) is a ripe strawberry or a ripened banana. But a quality flavour made to provide suitable levels of fermented sugars, organic acids and bioactive substances will do the trick - they will not think visually or logically like us. It might sound strange but using actual acai berries in cold water works, yet in the adverts that promote acai berry for slimming or getting a 'ripped' toned muscular body acai lowers appetite - something anglers may not think is a good thing of course! But acai has 10 times the levels of metabolism-boosting anthocyanins that blueberries contain and fish instinctively certainly know about these babies, as metabolism is exceptionally important to energy efficiency in carp where carbohydrate food is relatively low in abundance compared to natural protein sources in the natural aquatic environment!

Many flavours you may think are weird work extremely well, such as a mixture of marmite, sesame seed oil, liquid lecithins and honey, or liquid yeast and cream flavours, and with squid flavours and extracts for instance. Crab and cream is an obvious alternative flavour, but spicy orange may not seem so obvious, just like cheese and garlic flavours with black pepper oil, for instance.

As carp detect certain substances down to as little as 6 parts in a million in water, never overlook the fact that trace odours and taste factors of each and every dry powder or additive included in your baits can have a synergistic effect

and really make a difference to your bait's impact and performance when in active combination in solution (i.e. when water penetrates your bait).

Think laterally - why not make a homemade meat-bait soak mixture with fennel essential oil and mint essential oil, and attract carp to your hook using a bait that is completely new, and unique, and very effective! If you must use aniseed essential oil, why not cut it with fennel oil or even garlic oil, or many of hundreds of others that are available and not used by the masses of fashion-conscious anglers?!

For much more information on making unique homemade baits and adapting readymade baits, altering them for many different fishing conditions and applications, see my readymade bait success and homemade bait making secrets E-books below.

By Tim Richardson.

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