

The Complete Guide to Fishing Baits

**FREE
BOOKLET**
NOT FOR RESALE

Traditional, Modern & Forgotten Baits
Discover what fish eat and how to catch them!

By Clive Branson
Former World Angling Champion
Sharing over 60 years of
angling experience



Maggots, Pinkies
and Casters

Worms and
Natural Baits

Baits from
the Kitchen

Seed Baits
and Pellets

Groundbaits,
Pellets and Feed

Forgotten
Fishing Baits



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Maggots, Pinkies Squatts and Casters

Some of the most **successful** fishing baits ever used!

Different flies produce maggots of different sizes and colours!

1 Maggots – The All-Round Bait

The most commonly used maggots are produced from bluebottle flies. They are available in white, red and bronze and are an excellent all-round bait for roach, bream, perch, tench, chub and carp. They can be used on the hook singly or in bunches and are ideal for loose feeding to keep fish interested.



White, red and bronze maggots are all effective. Try different colours to see what the fish prefer on the day.

2 Pinkies – Small but Deadly

Pinkies are smaller maggots, usually produced by greenbottle flies. Their small size makes them perfect for roach, dace, bleak and other smaller fish, and they are especially effective in colder conditions when fish feed more cautiously. Pinkies are ideal for fishing with small hooks and fine tackle.



Pinkies are a great bait for winter fishing and clear water when fish are feeding cautiously.

3 Squatts – The Tiny Maggot

Squatts are very small maggots, traditionally produced from houseflies. They were once widely used by match anglers, particularly on canals and difficult venues. Their tiny size makes them useful for loose feeding without quickly satisfying the fish. They can also be mixed with groundbait.



Squatts are ideal for roach, small skimmers and when fish are feeding very cautiously.

4 Casters – The Maggot's Next Stage

When a maggot finishes feeding it transforms into a pupa, commonly called a caster. Fresh casters are pale at first and gradually darken to a rich brown. Casters are particularly effective for quality roach, bream, chub and tench. They can be used on the hook or loose-fed, either alone or mixed with hempseed and other baits.



Fresh casters can be very effective, especially for bigger fish. Keep them cool and dry for best results.

5 Hooking Maggots and Casters

Maggots can be hooked in different ways depending on the size of fish you are targeting. A single maggot is ideal for small fish, while two or three maggots can attract larger fish. Casters are best hooked through the thicker end.



Use a fine hook for pinkies and squatts, and a slightly larger hook for maggots and casters. Always keep the point clear.

6 Feeding Tips

Loose feeding maggots and casters can be very effective, especially in stillwaters and slow-flowing rivers. Feed small amounts regularly rather than large quantities at once. A pot or catapult is ideal for introducing maggots and casters accurately.



Feed little and often to keep fish in your swim without overfeeding them.



Top Tip!

Try mixing maggots and casters together in your groundbait for an extra attraction. This can be especially effective for bream and tench.



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Worms and Natural Baits

Traditional and natural baits that catch a wide range of fish all year round!

Natural baits are a great choice for rivers, lakes and canals!



1 Lobworms – A Classic Bait

Lobworms are one of the best all-round baits. They are especially effective for bream, barbel, chub, tench and eels. They can be used on their own or in combination with other baits such as maggots or casters.

TIP: Keep lobworms cool and damp in soil or a worm box to keep them lively.



Lobworms are tough, lively and ideal for rivers and big fish.

2 Redworms – Perfect for Stillwaters

Redworms, also known as brandlings, are smaller than lobworms and are ideal for roach, skimmers, perch and tench. They are very popular on lakes and canals, especially when fish are feeding cautiously. They can be used on the hook or loose fed.

TIP: Store redworms in damp compost or worm earth to keep them in good condition.



Redworms are ideal for roach, skimmers and other smaller fish.

3 Dendrobaena – Versatile and Hardy

Dendrobaena worms are hardy, easy to keep and excellent for a wide range of fish including roach, bream, tench and barbel. They are a good choice when lobworms are not available, and they work well on both lakes and rivers.

TIP: They can be kept for long periods in damp newspaper or compost.



Dendrobaenas are a reliable bait for many different species.

4 Leech – A Big Fish Bait

Leeches are a superb bait for big fish such as barbel, chub and bream. They can be fished whole, in halves or in small sections. They are particularly effective in the colder months when fish are less active. Always check local rules before collecting leeches.

TIP: Keep leeches in damp peat moss in a cool, dark place.



Leeches are a top bait for barbel, chub and bream.

5 Caster Worms and Bloodworms

Caster worms (woodlice) and bloodworms are natural baits that can be very effective, especially on stillwaters. Bloodworms are particularly good for roach, rudd and skimmers, and can also be used in groundbait.

TIP: Bloodworms can be kept in the fridge in slightly damp tissue.



Caster worms (woodlice)



Bloodworms

Both caster worms and bloodworms are excellent for roach and skimmers.

6 Other Natural Baits

There are many other natural baits that can catch fish, including gentles, leatherjackets, caddis larvae, wasp grubs and grasshoppers. These baits can be very effective at certain times of the year and on specific venues, and are well worth trying.

TIP: Many of these baits can be found locally, but always collect them responsibly and respect the environment.



Gentles



Leatherjackets



Caddis larvae



Wasp grubs



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Kitchen Baits

Simple, Cheap and Effective!

Everyday foods that catch fish all year round!

Many common foods make excellent baits and can be just as effective as live baits!



1 Bread – A Classic Bait

Bread is one of the most popular and versatile baits in coarse fishing. It is cheap, easy to obtain and catches a wide range of fish, especially roach, bream, tench and carp. It can be used as flake, bread punch or paste, and works well on the float, feeder or ledger.



TIP: Use fresh bread for flake and slightly stale bread for punching or making paste.

2 Sweetcorn – A Year-Round Winner

Sweetcorn is a very effective bait for carp, tench, bream and barbel. It can be used on the hook, in groundbait or loose fed. Canned sweetcorn is the most convenient, but fresh or frozen sweetcorn can also be excellent, especially in warmer months.



TIP: Try flavoured sweetcorn such as vanilla or pineapple for extra attraction, especially for carp.

3 Meat – A Natural Fish Food

Meat, such as luncheon meat, spam or cooked meat, is a brilliant bait for bigger fish like chub, barbel and carp. It is particularly effective on rivers but can also work well on lakes and canals. It can be fished on the hook, used in a feeder or mixed into groundbait.



TIP: Cut meat into firm cubes and use a strong hook. Cured meat, such as spam, stays on the hook well and is ideal for rivers.

4 Cheese – A Proven Bait

Cheese is a traditional bait that still catches fish today. It is excellent for chub, carp, tench and barbel. Strong-flavoured cheeses, such as cheddar or Red Leicester, are the most effective. It can be fished on its own or in combination with other baits.



TIP: Cut cheese into small firm cubes. A stronger cheese often works best, especially in clear water.

5 Pastas and Grains

Pasta, rice, couscous and other grains can be excellent baits, especially for roach, bream and tench. They are easy to prepare, inexpensive and can be used on the hook or loose fed. They take on flavour well and can be fished plain or flavoured with additives.



TIP: Cook pasta or rice until soft but firm. Add flavourings such as garlic, vanilla or aniseed for extra attraction.

6 Potatoes – An Old Favourite

Potatoes have been used as fishing bait for generations and are still very effective. They are particularly good for carp, tench and bream. Boiled potatoes can be cut into cubes, slices or mashed to form a paste. They can also be flavoured with essences or food colourings.



TIP: Use firm, waxy potatoes and boil until just soft. Add a little flavouring or colouring to make them more attractive.

Top Tip!

Many kitchen baits can be improved by adding flavourings or food colourings. Experiment to see what works best on your local waters.



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Seed Baits and Pellets

Natural seeds and pellets that attract a wide range of fish and can be used all year round!

Seed baits and pellets are highly attractive, natural foods that catch a wide range of species!

1 Hemp – A Proven Winner

Hemp seed is one of the most popular and effective bait and feed items. It is rich in natural oils, highly attractive and keeps fish in your swim for a long time. Hemp is excellent for bream, tench, roach, chub and barbel. It can be used on its own, mixed with other seeds, or added to groundbait.



TIP: Soak hemp for 12–24 hours and then simmer gently for 20–30 minutes until just split. Keep some whole for feeding.

2 Tares – A Top Bait for Big Fish

Tares (vetch seed) are a favourite bait for bigger fish, especially bream, tench and barbel. They are hard when dry but soften when soaked and cooked. Tares are very effective on rivers and canals and can be used on their own or mixed with hemp, peas or other seeds.



TIP: Soak tares for 24 hours, then boil gently for 40–60 minutes until soft but still firm. Flavour with a little salt or additive if required.

3 Peas – A Classic Bait

Peas have been used by anglers for generations and are still one of the best big fish baits. They are excellent for bream, barbel, carp and tench. They can be used whole, half or mashed and work well on rivers, lakes and canals. They also make a great feeding bait when mixed with other seeds.



TIP: Soak dried peas for 12–24 hours and then simmer gently until soft. Keep them firm and use a hair rig for larger fish.

4 Chick Peas – A Big Fish Magnet

Chick peas (garbanzo beans) are a superb bait for larger fish, especially carp, barbel and big bream. They are very tough, so they stay on the hook well and can also be used in groundbait. Their hard texture means they can be used in meshed PVA bags or loose in feed for long-lasting attraction.



TIP: Soak chick peas for 24 hours and then boil for 60–90 minutes until just soft. They can also be flavoured with garlic or other additives.

5 Pellets – Versatile and Effective

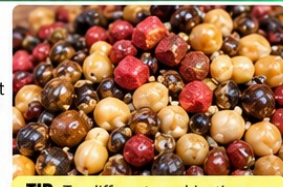
Pellets are a modern bait that are highly attractive and easy to use. They come in different sizes and flavours and are excellent for carp, F1s, bream, tench and barbel. They can be used on the hook, fed loose, in a pole pot or in a feeder. Soft pellets work well for winter fishing, while harder pellets are good for bigger fish.



TIP: Start with small pellets (2–4mm) for most species. You can pre-soak pellets to soften them or use them dry depending on the conditions.

6 Mixing Seeds and Pellets

A mixture of seeds and pellets can be extremely effective, especially for bream, tench, carp and barbel. Combining different baits creates a varied feed that keeps fish interested for longer. You can add hemp, tares, peas, chick peas and small pellets to your groundbait or feed them loose to build a carpet of attraction in your swim.



TIP: Try different combinations to see what works best on your local water. A mix of hemp, peas and small pellets is a great all-round option.



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Forgotten Fishing Baits

Old favourites that still catch fish today!

Don't forget these classic baits – they still work!

1 Leatherjackets – A Winter Winner

Leatherjackets are the larvae of crane flies and can be found in damp ground, lawns and fields. They are a superb bait for roach, bream, tench and chub, especially during the colder months when other baits are less effective. They are tough, stay on the hook well and can also be used in groundbait.



TIP: Keep leatherjackets in damp soil or compost to keep them alive and fresh.

2 Gozzers – A Top Roach Bait

Gozzers are the larvae of the blackfly and are a classic roach bait. They are usually found in river gravel, on weirs and in fast flowing water. Gozzers are best used in small numbers, either on the hook or loose feed. They are particularly effective in clear water and can also catch skimmers and dace.



TIP: Collect gozzers from clean gravelly areas and keep them cool and moist in a damp cloth.

3 Caddis Larvae – Natural and Effective

Caddis larvae live in cases made from sand, gravel or plant material and are found in rivers, streams and lakes. They are a highly attractive bait for trout, grayling, roach and dace. They can be used with or without the case and work well when fish are feeding naturally on insects.



TIP: Collect caddis larvae from clean river beds. They are best kept in cool, fresh water with some gravel.

4 Wasp Grubs – A Big Fish Bait

Wasp grubs (also called wasp larvae) are a superb bait for larger fish, especially chub, barbel and carp. They can be found in old wasp nests, usually in sheds, tree hollows or roof spaces. Wasp grubs are very soft, highly attractive and can also be used in groundbait or on the hook.



TIP: Collect from old nests and keep cool in a container with a little damp tissue.

5 Snails – A River Classic

Snails are a traditional bait that still catch fish today. They are excellent for chub, barbel and carp and can also catch roach and bream. Both whole snails and just the flesh can be used. They are tough, stay on the hook well and are very effective on rivers.



TIP: Collect freshwater snails from the riverbank and keep them in a bucket of fresh water with some weed.

6 Insects – A Natural Food Source

Many insects make excellent fishing baits, including grasshoppers, grass grubs, crickets, beetles and ants. They are particularly useful in the summer months and can be very effective for roach, dace, chub, tench and carp. Fishing with natural insects can be great fun and often produces surprising results.



TIP: Collect insects from fields and grassland and keep them cool in a ventilated container with some fresh grass.

Top Tip!

Forgotten baits can be highly effective, especially when fish are wary. Try them on their own or mixed with groundbait, seeds or pellets.



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Choosing the Right Bait for the Right Fish

Match the bait to the species and catch more fish!

Different fish prefer different baits – try a few and see what works on your venue!

1 Roach and Rudd – Silver Beauties

Roach and rudd are attracted to a wide range of baits including maggots, pinkies, casters, hemp, tares, bread and sweetcorn. They can be caught on the float or the waggler in rivers, lakes and canals.



TIP: Feed hemp or tares loose to attract roach and rudd, then use a few grains or a single grain on the hook.

2 Bream and Skimmers – The Feeder

Bream and skimmers respond well to maggots, casters, worms, sweetcorn, pellets and groundbait. They often feed in groups so it's important to establish a good feeding area with regular feed of groundbait, pellets or particles.



TIP: Feed a little and often to keep fish in the area. A mix of groundbait and casters or maggots works especially well.

3 Chub and Barbel – River Powerhouses

Chub and barbel are strong, powerful fish and can be caught on bread, cheese, luncheon meat, worms, pellets and natural baits such as cheese paste or boilies. They are often found in rivers with a good flow.



TIP: Present your bait naturally in the flow. Use just enough weight to hold bottom and let the bait move with the current.

4 Tench and Carp – Hard Fighting Fish

Tench and carp are attracted to larger baits such as sweetcorn, worms, pellets, chickpeas, meat and boilies. They often feed confidently once they find food and can be caught on the float, feeder or on the bottom.



TIP: Use larger hook baits for bigger fish, especially in clear water or on wary carp. Pre-baiting with pellets or particles helps.

5 Perch and Predatory Fish – Active Hunters

Perch and other predatory fish will take baits such as worms, maggots, prawns and small fish baits. They can be caught on float, spinning or ledgered baits, depending on the venue and local regulations.



TIP: Check local rules as some venues have restrictions on live or dead fish baits. Use suitable tackle and handle fish carefully.

6 Dace and Small River Fish – Plenty of Action

Dace, bleak and other small river fish are very attracted to small baits such as maggots, pinkies, squatts and casters. They are often caught when trotting a float down the river with little and often feeding.



TIP: Feed little and often to keep fish interested. A few maggots or a single caster on the hook is often the most effective approach.

Champion's Tip!

Never become a slave to one bait! Fish can change their feeding preferences throughout the day. Sometimes a simple change of bait can transform your catch.



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10 Golden Rules for Successful Bait Fishing

Simple tips that will help you catch more fish!

Enjoy your fishing, respect the environment and keep our waters special for the future!

1 Choose the right bait for the species



Different fish prefer different baits. Match your bait to the species and the conditions. If in doubt, start with maggots – they catch fish all year round.

3 Introduce bait with care



Feed little and often, especially at the start. This helps to build a feeding area and keeps the fish interested without overfeeding them.

5 Vary your bait



Don't be afraid to experiment. If the fish aren't feeding, try a different bait such as caster, hemp, bread, sweetcorn or a small pellet. A change can make all the difference.

7 Pay attention to the conditions



Fish can feed differently depending on the weather, water temperature and time of year. Adjust your bait, depth and feeding to suit the conditions.

9 Learn from your captures



Look at what fish are feeding on. Sometimes a small change in bait or presentation can turn a slow day into a great one. Nature often gives you the clues.

2 Prepare your bait properly



Soak, cook or prepare seeds, pellets and natural baits correctly. Well-prepared bait is more attractive and will keep fish in your swim for longer.

4 Use fresh bait



Fresh bait catches more fish! Keep maggots, worms and other baits in good condition, cool in warm weather and protected from the sun.

6 Present your bait naturally



Use the right rig and hook size and present the bait so it looks natural. In flowing water, use just enough weight to hold bottom and let the bait move naturally.

8 Keep your swim tidy



Keep your swim clean and free from litter. Take all rubbish home and respect other anglers, wildlife and the environment.

10 Most importantly – enjoy your fishing!



Fishing is about more than just catching fish. Enjoy the fresh air, wildlife and peace and remember to look after our waters for future generations.



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