

## **Technical Talk... Salmon Fishing**

By: Capt. David Bacon

Two common techniques for fishing salmon are trolling and mooching. Mooching works best when massive baitballs and good numbers of salmon are concentrated in a small area. Trolling allows for covering some ground and finding the fish.

***Rigging for Trolling:*** Downriggers and weight releases are the two common rigging options. Downriggers make it easy to fish deeper with light lines. With weight releases, the weight pops off when the fish bites, making for a good surface fight without any weight or obstructions (such as downrigger cables) in the water.

The line from the rod ties onto the weight release or pinches into a release on the downrigger cable. Behind that run a 36 to 48 inch leader to a dodger or flasher blade. Dodgers kick side to side while flasher blades get a full rotation when trolling speed is increased. Behind the blade, run 12 to 20 inches of 15 to 30 pound fluorocarbon leader. The short leader causes action from the blade to be imparted to the trailing lure and helps attract strikes.

Bait hoods such as the Rotary Salmon Killer are effective. Pinch one of these hoods over the head of an anchovy or sardine, and you're good to go.

When trolling lures, experienced anglers often dispense with the flasher blade because the action of the lure is sufficient to draw a reaction from the fish. Flutter spoons are old favorites. Preferred colors are white, pearlescent, water mellon, and bubble gum and wonder bread.

More salmon are caught with hoochies than with anything else. Try a flashy mylar skirt under the hoochy for added effect.

***Rigging for Mooching:*** Go light! Even though a twenty to thirty pound fish is the goal, I recommend 10lb to 15lb line. Fluorocarbon line is king because of its low visibility and a sliding sinker rig is the most common mooching method. The small weight (1/8 to 1/2 oz) can slide to the hook or be held 18 to 14 inches up the line with a barrel swivel or tiny split shot. Tie on a hook to match the bait size.

Bait up with an anchovy, sardine, herring or smelt. Bait-threaders facilitate running the line through a baitfish for more bites and a better bite to hookup ratio.

***Finding fish:*** Baitfish and water conditions are important clues to locating salmon. They respond to the conditions of the moment such as water temps, salinity, clarity, as well as abundance of forage food. The best water conditions are greenish color and with lots of stuff on and in the water - bait, weeds, gunk that accumulates on lines when trolling, jellyfish, birds, etc.

Fish current breaks. To a salmon, these are like highways with fast food stops. Look for long meandering trails of weeds and drifting materials.

***Techniques for Trolling:*** Stack the water column when trolling for salmon because you never know what depth they prefer at a given time. Run one rig near the bottom, and the remaining rigs spaced evenly up to near the surface. When one rig gets bit, put a second rig at near the same depth to duplicate success.

Troll slow – 1.5 to 3 knots of speed through water (not speed over ground) and vary trolling angles against the sun, current, and swells. Trolling in an S pattern naturally puts the lures at most angles to those contributing factors. Once bit, troll back through the same area on the same compass course.

When trolling a current break, periodically cut across and troll along the other side. One side or the other may be better due to temperature, clarity, or volume of bait.

***Techniques for Mooching:*** Locate concentrations of bait, then anchor or drift over baitballs. Slowly but steadily chum whole or chunked baitfish such as anchovies or sardines, while putting out baited lines. Drop baits to the depth where the fishfinder shows bait and fish. Set a loose drag and wait.

When a fish strikes, it may be a soft tentative tug. Give it time to swallow then gently pull the line taught. If you feel weight, begin reeling without a savage hookset.