

# The Serious Tackle Box

With Chris Gonzales

*Experienced Fishing Advice To  
Make Fishing Great Again*



## Bottoms Up Baitfish

**While the term “Bottoms Up”** might be associated with some form of drinking, it’s not in this case. It is hopefully associated with eating, though, especially if you’re a red snapper, ling, dolphin, kingfish, or grouper on the lookout for an easy meal.

When a baitfish is hooked in this bottom-up configuration, the weight of the hook will bring it into the inverted position while on the sink. This is the look of an injured, vulnerable baitfish, especially with added twitches from your rod tip. Part of this look is the exposed white underbelly that gives the look of being in distress. It’s a look I’ve successfully used for well over fifteen years.

When rigging up, use 2 to 3 ft. of 40 to 80 lb. clear mono for the leader. I also recommend using Fluorocarbon. Use an 80 or 130 lb. Spro® Power Swivel between your main line and the leader. This rig can also be fished with a wire leader; my choice is AFW, 80 lb.

With the hook placed into the baitfish as shown in the illustration, the hookup potential is raised. So is the chance of the exposed hook point finding something besides your target. When fishing this “Bottoms Up Baitfish” rig close to any structure, it would be best to turn the hook around and embed it into the baitfish’s body. This works best with softer-bodied baits, such as sardines, sand trout, etc. The through-the-mouth, out-the-gillplate and then into-the-body with the hook makes it necessary to twitch this bait gently; also, cast it gently. This is because any vigorous movement of the hook will cause the baitfish to curl or bend, causing a spinning motion of the baitfish. It’s really not that difficult to do this gentle loading—it’s just something to remember and think about.

Remember that the purpose of any weight added is to get and keep your bait presentation at the desired depth, where the fish are holding. If the combined weight of the bait, hook, leader, swivel, and line can get your bait into the strike zone, no eggweight of any size is needed. Fished without an eggweight above the swivel, it’s ready to attract strikes from near-surface cruisers such as ling, dolphin, or kingfish.

To fish the “Bottoms Up Baitfish” rig, either slowly play your line out from close to the boat or gently cast with a slow, sweeping rod motion. When casting, also gently thumb the reel spool to slow it down a bit just before the bait enters the water. As I’ve said in past issues, this straightens out your presentation, making it instantly ready to make its own presentation, starting just below the surface. It’s best to keep giving slack to your line while on the sink to the strike zone to help avoid that bending of the bait mentioned earlier. Count down, and remember the count that got you to the point in the water column where a pickup or strike occurred. Repeat that sink count the next time you send your bait out and anticipate another strike at that same general depth.

While the countdown method works well, another method for returning to the relatively same level in the water column is available to superbraid users fishing a reel without a levelwind. On the retrieve, after a pickup or strike, initially don’t use a criss-cross motion to lay the line back on the spool. Build a small hump of line on the spool, then start your criss-cross thumb motion to evenly lay the line back on the spool. On the next cast,

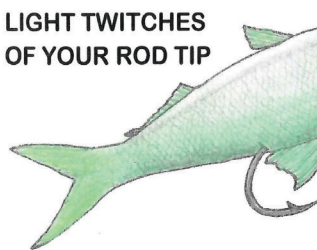
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**MAKE YOUR DEAD  
BAITFISH MIMIC AN  
ALIVE BUT INJURED BAIT  
BY GIVING PERIODIC  
LIGHT TWITCHES  
OF YOUR ROD TIP**

OPTIONAL EGGWEIGHT  
USED AND SIZED AS  
CURRENT  
DICTATES

SPRO  
POWER  
SWIVEL

2-3' OF MONO  
OR WIRE LEADER  
WITH OPTIONAL POOR  
MAN'S FLUOROCARBON OR  
CAMO PAINT TREATMENT



**THE HOOK'S WEIGHT &  
LOCATION IN THE  
BAITFISH NATURALLY  
ROTATES IT TO A  
BOTTOMS UP POSITION.**



let the line out slowly while on the sink until the hump appears and then disappears. You will then be very close to the depth where you had your last success. This is very important at times, especially where red snapper fishing is concerned. Snapper, unless voraciously hungry, aren't likely to chase a bait like a ling or kingfish would. Stop the bait short, or let it go too deep, and they may not make a great depth change to eat it.

When using a "J" hook as shown in the illustration, I play the line out to the desired depth. Give a little slack at the pickup, then put the reel into gear, and point the rod tip at the line's entry point into the water, quickly wind tight, and vigorously set the hook. When using a circle hook, such as a Daiichi® D84Z in size 5/0 or 7/0, the vigorous hookset isn't necessary. When the line comes tight, with the reel in gear, firmly raise the rod, setting the hook. A hard hook setting motion will likely result in no hookup when using a circle hook; a steady loading will greatly increase your hookups.

Another point I'd like to mention is that another baitfish could be added when the hook point is exposed in the primary baitfish. Hook the second baitfish in one eye and out the other. This larger profile, along with the added scent, raises all of the strike-generating features of this "Bottoms Up Baitfish" rig. Give a bit more time to allow the baits to be swallowed before attempting to set the hook, since

the hook point is partially obscured. This added baitfish is especially effective when larger fish are in the area and are your target. Double-baiting doesn't work nearly as well when using a circle hook and should be avoided.

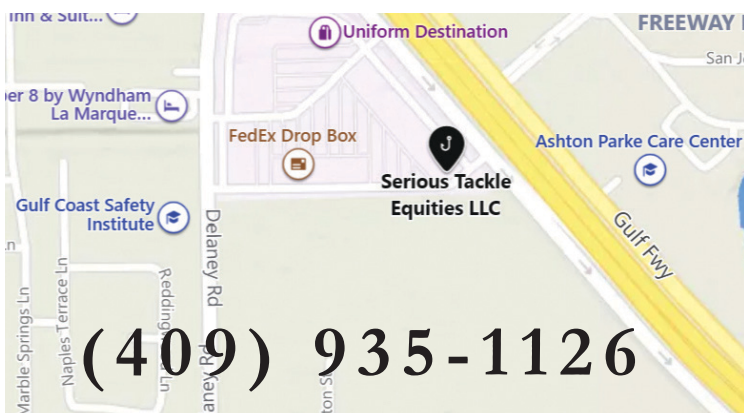
The "Bottoms Up Baitfish" rigging method gives another look that predators readily home in on. The stealth measures taken in the leader, swivel, and eggweight areas help to hide what they may be watching out for—something unnatural. Give these rigging and hooking procedures a try; they could be the edge you're looking for, and you may also soon be saying "Bottoms Up".

If you have any questions, stop by Serious Tackle or email me at [chris@serioustackle.com](mailto:chris@serioustackle.com)

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