

The Serious Tackle Box

With Chris Gonzales

Boston and Tinker Mac Attack

*Experienced Fishing Advice To
Make Fishing Great Again*



Looking for an available frozen bait that will take sow snapper, groupers, smoker kingfish, wahoo, and amberjack? Tinker mackerel will do the job for you. These 10 to 12" baits can be used whole or cut in half and rigged in an assortment of ways to be fished anywhere from the surface to the bottom .. They are big baits for big fish~ their 2" diameter and 12" length are a big, easy meal that gets a lot of attention.

Lunds Boston mackerel runs about \$50 for a 25# frozen flat in my area and I break it apart and put them into 2-gallon Ziplocs, 8 or 9 to a bag. Using them individually, I get one bag at a time out of the cooler which keeps them fresh and firm longer. If several people will be using them at the same time, you could get away with opening the whole flat at once and eliminate the Ziplocs. A 25# flat usually has around 45 of these great baits in it.

Tinker mackerel can be freelined for sow snapper, smoker kingfish, and wahoo. They do tend to sink faster than some of the smaller baits you have used in the past, such as cigarfish or Spanish sardines. If they sink too deep from lack of current, a float will have to be used to control their depth. Most of the time, I fish them with no weight but if one's needed, I use an appropriately sized egg sinker about 3' above the hook to get to the desired depth.

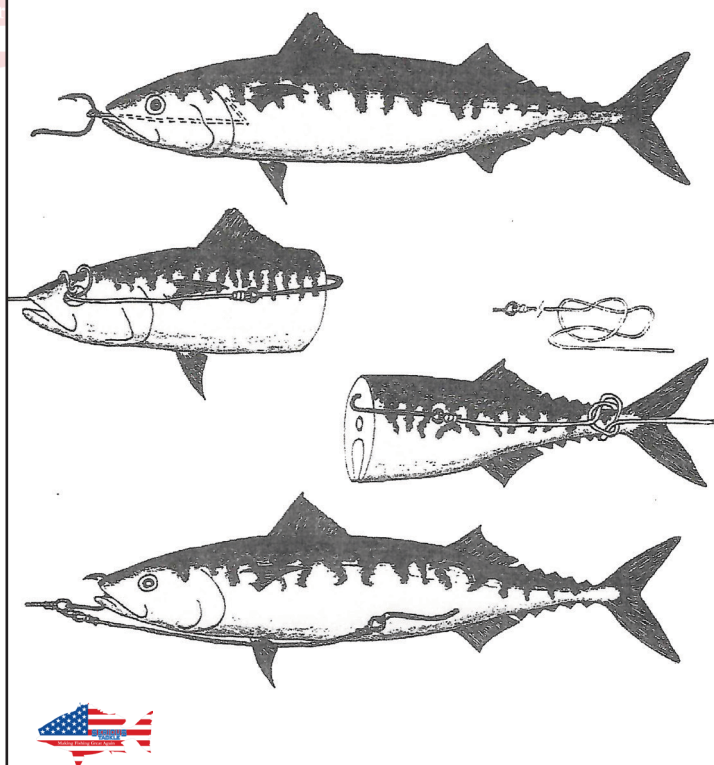
After a strike at the mid-depths, I start retrieving the line and make a small "hump" on the spool. Then the rest of the line is wound back on the spool with the normal crisscross thumb motion. On the next cast/drop, I let the line out till the "hump" is gone, I'm back at the level that I had the last strike and hopefully about to be hooked up again.... it works, try it.

When fished for bottom feeders, I generally drop the egg sinker till it bumps the bottom, then reel up until the bait's about 3' off the bottom with the rod at about the 10 o'clock position; I wait for the bait to be taken. As the fish swims away with it, I drop the rod tip till the rod is in the vertical position, tighten up any slack then strike hard, usually, I will be hooked up.

The drawing shows four different hooking/rigging methods, using some of them in a slightly different way, you can get at least four other variations for use with these mackerel baits. The top illustration shows the "banjo" method. Its advantage is the ultra-natural action that comes from the free-swinging bait holder on the hook. Make this bait holder from #9 or

#10 single-strand wire; the eye is formed around the hook's barb; use 3-barrel wraps. The bait holder should be about 3" from the hook to the "barb's" 30-degree bend on its outer end, the "barb" is about 3/4" long. Push the wire and part off the hook's bend into the bait's mouth, then pull it out, impaling the bait on the bait holder's barb. This should put the hook just outside the bait's nose, giving the freedom of movement that makes this rig work. Black hooks will work but I prefer to spray paint mine either camo blue or green. Use the hook type of your choice in the smallest size you can use for the fish that's targeted. The majority of the time, I use 10/0 Gamakatsu Octopus hooks, big bait, big hook, and hopefully a big fish. The method can be used either with a wire or mono leader and "swallowing time" may vary according to what hits it. I prefer single-strand wire for kingfish and wahoo over cable. Having to let them swallow it longer, the solid wire pulls through their closed teeth more easily, resulting in surer hookups.

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The second and third examples show mono rigging for Tinker mackerel cut in half. These would be fished for any species without razor-sharp teeth. Some other variations would be that this "eye socket wrap" and tail "loop knot" could be used with whole baits. The 10/0 Octopus hook can be placed beyond the mid-body for short strikers with the "eye socket wrap" or through the eye socket/forward part of the body when using the tail "loop knot". In either case, when the "wrap" or "knot" is tightened, some slack between them and the hook must be maintained or the bait will curl and spin.

When using the tail "loop knot" technique with whole mackerel, place the hook in the lower part of the body crossways just above the vent area. When the predator fish takes the whole bait headfirst this rearward-placed hook will let the fish feel the hook/leader late in the swallowing process and it may be too late to spit it without being hooked. This will likely result in even finicky feeders being hooked, probably in the lips. The loop knot example above the tail half shows how to form the knot. The loop on the right side of the knot goes over and around the bait's tail. When tied as drawn, the knot will untie itself without damaging the mono leader, at the hookset when the line comes tight.

The bottom bait shows a nose hook, 1/0-2/0 short shank, with the main hook embedded in the side beyond the mid-body. The main hook that I use most of the time is a 10/0 % Gamakatsu Octopus: they're sharp, strong, hook up well, and hold. The way I make this rig is to include a 200# welded ring in the leader loop below the nose hook's eye. This ring

is a secure attachment point for the 5-6" wire going back to the main hook. The drawing shows cable but solid wire can be used also. Be sure that the wire from the nose hook to the main hook has a little slack in it when the main hook is in place. The nose hook must take the strain from the main line, if the main hook takes the load the mackerel will bend and spin ... not natural looking. Other variations would be a mono leader ahead of the nose hook, or all mono where cutoffs aren't a problem. You can also nose hook only using a 10/0 Gamakatsu Octopus, hooked through the nose-bottom to top, mono, or wire ahead of the hook.

While these Tinker mackerel aren't the baits to end all baits, they are very effective. Big baits for big fish; give them a try along with the rigging and use suggestions - you won't be disappointed.

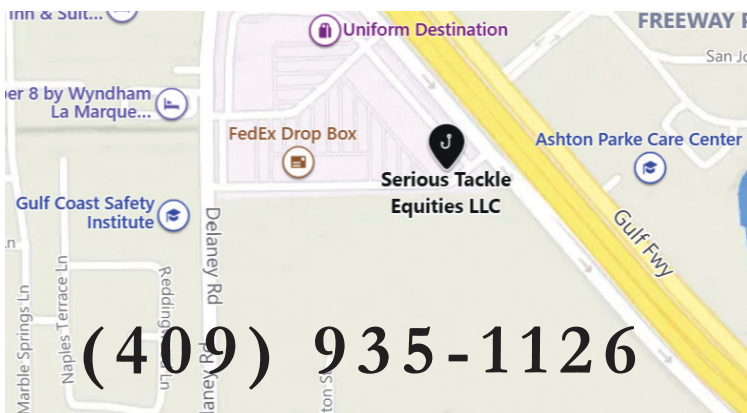
If you have any questions, stop by Serious Tackle or email me at

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