



Species:



Bream

Tactic:

- Pole
- Float

Difficulty:



Bream blitz ON BREAD

Bream are flourishing in our canals and Jon Arthur targets them with a generous helping on the hook

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Bream blitz on bread

CANALS have a reputation for containing only tiddlers, trollies and trash. Those that bother to fish them, though, know this characterisation is way off the mark.

The old adage of catching 'bits and bonuses' is long gone, because these days the nation's canal network abounds with specimen-sized fish of all sizes. And one species that has particularly thrived on this neglect is bream.

"I have fished the Oxford Canal, where we are today, since I was a kid," Drennan's Jon Arthur told us. "And I reckon that the fishing is almost up to commercial standards on some stretches. Yes, there are still a lot of small fish in canals, but there are just as many lumps!"

To prove his point, we joined Jon on a stretch of the canal, just north of Oxford, where using what he calls a 'Barnsley barmcake' on the hook – a big piece of punched bread to you and me – he set about putting a few slabs in the net.

Where to find canal bream

Being a lazy, almost stately fish, bream are relatively easy to track down. Anywhere the canal widens – turning circles or marinas – are areas which enable them to move away from boat traffic.

Another place to look is anywhere the canal is deeper, but with the Oxford being notoriously shallow, this is rarely an option here.

"Regards swim location, I tend to avoid the deepest part, down the central track, preferring to present the bait around two to three inches up the far-bank slope. The very

bottom of the channel

is where the rubbish collects, and being slightly up the slope means that bream don't have to tip up too far to feed."



Left: Bread crumb for loosefeed is blitzed twice

Inset: Use large 5mm-7mm punches for bream

Top right: Punch out bread on a hard surface



The Barnsley barmcake

Bread and bream don't often get put together. But we all fish for them using groundbait. So what's the difference? Well, for Jon, rather than the classic approach of small nuggets with 2mm and 3mm punches being fished over the top, the 39-year-old Oxfordshire rod adopts a very positive approach.

"I like to kick off the swim with a full 250ml pole cup of liquidised bread, and then I fish either a 5mm or 7mm bread punch over the top. It is something I read about in a bread-fishing article around 20-years ago, and I have fished that way ever since."

For the hookbait, Jon uses Warburton's Medium sliced white, straight from the bag. The liquidised loosefeed is prepared more meticulously, however.



Jon targeted two swims in a marina for bream

A few days prior, Jon will coarsely blitz a few loaves before freezing the resulting crumb. Then, on the day or the night prior, he will again run the still frozen crumb through the liquidiser. Being frozen and brittle, stops it clogging the blades, so the result is much finer. The final part is to run the lot through a riddle just to remove any remaining lumps.

Bread and bream

Jon reckons that too many anglers are scared to fish positively with bread, considering it to be too filling. But they think nothing of feeding the same amount of groundbait!

"Bream are eating machines, and once the shoal turns up, they will soon go through a cup or two of liquidised bread. The one thing they don't like is to have loosefeed raining down on them when they feed in the swim. This is why I prime my two lines positively so there is a good carpet of bait on the bottom to hold the shoal."



Jon's tackle:

Pole: Drennan Acolyte
Elastic: Preston Innovations
 Slip Elastic No.5
Mainline: Drennan Double
 Strength Mono 0.12mm (2lb 12oz)
Hooklink: Drennan Supplex
 0.95mm (1lb 3oz)
Hook: Kamasan B511 size 16
Hookbait: 7mm & 5mm
 breadpunch
Loosefeed: Liquidised bread

Above: Use a pole elastic strong enough, but soft enough to prevent hooked bream splashing

With two lines fed and ready to go, Jon lowered his homemade 0.2g pole rig baited with a 7mm punch of bread over the top.

Although it's common to get a bream quite quickly, Jon has no issues waiting an hour for the first bite as he knows when they do come, they will turn up in numbers. A bite-less hour can then see you landing 60lb during the next 30 minutes.

"The important thing is not to keep topping up, as you might a roach line," he said. "The only time I loosefeed is after I have had two slabs or if I have had a load of smaller fish and I feel they have cleaned me out," he continued.

"Again, I feed positively, using a full 250ml pot of liquidised bread. You are looking to prime the swim ready for the shoal. It may not be the most active or exciting approach but it certainly is highly effective."

Having waited around 30 minutes for his first fish, the bite was very positive. Simply lifting into the fish, the solid No.5 elastic was allowed to do its job.

The worst thing you can do when bream fishing in shallow water is to use too heavy an elastic so they splash on the top, because this will spook the rest of the shoal.

But, don't go too light as you still need to dictate terms and steer the fish away from its shoalmates as quickly as possible.

With this first fish coming in around the 5lb mark, Jon was into another of a similar size within a few minutes.

Topping up the swim, the shoal had undoubtedly backed off and he had to wait another 30 minutes for fish number three. By the end of the session, he had landed another slab as well as a handful of skimmers and a few quality roach.

Bread might be 'old hat' as a bait in this modern era, but no-one has told the bream. The Barnsley barmcake feature Jon read may be 20 years old, but the information is as relevant today as it was back then.



The best of Jon's bream haul – all on breadpunch