

Squid & How To Use Them

By Steve Hodges

After reading Owen Wilson's comments on using squid for bass in BASS Magazine No: 79, and of John Morgan's success at the BASS Gower fish-in, I thought I would write a bit more about this excellent bait.

Squid, unlike many other Molluscs, do not have an external shell. Instead they have an internal bone which is transparent. This enables them to swim freely in the open sea where they are surprisingly agile, producing short bursts of considerable speed when necessary by discharging a powerful jet of water to propel them through the sea. The body (or mantle) of the squid is streamlined in shape and contains the internal bone. The head has large eyes and a beaked mouth which is surrounded by ten sucker tentacles which are used to trap prey. When squid are threatened, like octopus, they can discharge a cloud of dark coloured ink to confuse their enemy and allow them to escape.

In British waters there are two species of squid which may be encountered; The Common Squid and the Long-Finned Squid. Both these can grow up to two feet in length and can be regularly seen in commercial catches at fish markets. For bass fishing however there is a species of squid found off the coast of North America known as "Californian" or "Calamari Squid". This species grows to 4-8 inches long and is imported into this country deep frozen. It is available from fishmongers and tackle shops in 1lb. and 5 lb. blocks and you will get 8-10 Squid per lb. Typical cost of this bait is £1.50 and £5.00 respectively.



I started using this bait originally out of necessity because it was easy to obtain as I lived inland I was unable to obtain more traditional fresh bass baits. However over the years I have found it to be excellent for bass and I still use it today for 90% of my bass bait fishing.

I have tried many end rigs with this bait and concluded that the simple running leger is the most suitable for bass. I use a 2-4 oz. Bass rod, ABU 6500c reel, 18 lbs. Sylcast straight through, terminating with a large Berkley swivel attached to a 30lbs. Amnesia hook length of 2-3 feet with a 610 Mustad 79515. The light lead is attached to an oval split link/small running swivel, on rough ground a 3 inch length of the light line can be used for the lead.

When using whole squid as a bait for Bass there are a number of important points to follow. Firstly, I like my squid to be thawed out completely before baiting up so I usually take them out of the freezer about 6 hours before use. You can thaw them quickly in water but I think you lose some of the scent using that method. I keep the squid in a bucket leaving them immersed in the natural juices that accumulate as they thaw out. When putting a whole Squid on the hook it is advisable to mount it in such a way so that it lies in a straight line and cannot slide down the bend of the hook to mask the point. To achieve this using 4-5 inch long squid,

I insert a Mustad 6/0, 79515 straight through the pointed end of the mantle and back through again about 1 inch below the first insertion. The hook is then pulled through so that the eye of the hook lies between the 2 insertions, exposing approximately 75% of the hook outside the bait. The hook is then bound tightly to the bait in one small area below the eye which enables the majority of the hook to stand proud of the bait. I mount the squid with the bone left in and most importantly with the head still attached as I consider the tentacles to be the most attractive part of the bait. For the larger squid of 6- 7 inches I mount them as above, but use a second 6/0 hook sliding freely above the first. This is slid down the trace and the line is wrapped 4 times around the shank then the hook is nicked through the top of the mantle to give extra support to the bait.



Squid fished in this way tends to release scent slowly so it is advisable to allow 30 minutes before changing baits. If you get a bite and fail to connect, leave the tackle in the water a while before retrieving, because sometimes the head will be taken first as it is easily detaches from the main body, then the fish will return for the rest. This has happened to me on a number of occasions.

When using a large bait such as whole squid do not think that you will always miss out on smaller fish because I have taken many small Flounders, Dogfish and Bass on this tackle. Indeed only last week while using a 8 inch squid with two 6/0 hooks for Cod I landed a 1 Ib. Silver Eel which had swallowed the head and was hooked well inside the mouth.

Finally ensure your hooks are very sharp, don't be tempted to re-freeze thawed out squid and discard any with a pinkish tinge (freezer burn).

I would like to hear from any other members who have any experiences, comments or tips regarding this particular bait.

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