

Surf Fishing and Rigging with Berkley Gulp!

By Bill Varney



Now that the water is beginning to cool food along the beach is becoming scarce and surf fish are on the hunt. During cold water months Berkley Gulp! Sandworms work great in the surf. Not only are they convenient to use and store but over the years whopper halibut, corbina and millions of perch have been lured by the Gulp! Sandworm. With the proper rigging and presentation you'll have a great chance to catch winter surf fish.

Our first job is to match Gulp! Sandworms (red, natural and olive) with the perfect rod and reel. When using Gulp! light-line equipment is a must. For my rod and reel setup I like to use 4-6lb mono on a 7-9' flexible, light-action spinning rod.

The next step is to figure out the correct rigging and how to present the bait. The Carolina rig would work great for rigging. In addition, there are two ways to go when it comes to hooking your bait.



First, let's start with the Carolina Rig. This set up is one of the most popular surf rigs and is easy to put together. Start with a sliding egg sinker; add a 6mm bead, #10 swivel, 18-30" of fluorocarbon leader and a hook. With egg sinkers remember to use larger sinkers in big surf/surge and lighter egg sinkers in smaller surf. When fishing near or upon rocks down-size your leader to 12" and use the lightest sinker possible to avoid snagging. For hooks, we prefer a light-wire hook size 2 or 4 (Gamakatsu, Owner, Mustad). These hooks are available in octopus, mosquito and split shot styles.



Gulp Hook: Gamakatsu 50409 or Owner Mosquito Light Hook

When fishing the open beach, the chances of snagging are minimized so you have more time to concentrate on presentation. On sandy beaches we like to hook the Glup! Sandworm by sliding

our hook end down the center of the bait and poking the sharp end back out near the tail.



Gulp Must be Placed as Straight as Possible on the Hook

Be sure to pull the Gulp! up onto the eye of the hook so it lays as flat as possible. This presentation allows the bait to lay flat on the hook and trail toward shore in a more natural way. If the bait is curved, even slightly, it will spin on the return and you'll have no chance at the big one.

When fishing near or upon rocks you have a much greater chance of snagging. To reduce the chances of a snag I down size my gear. Our rig changes when fishing near rocks because we want to use the smallest sliding egg sinker possible and shorten our leader. In this case we also use a weed-less application for hooking Gulp! By keeping our weight lighter and hiding the hook in the bait we are able to bounce across the bottom providing a natural presentation while rarely get snagged.

The most effective way to fish the Gulp! rig, on the open beach, is by casting in a fan pattern and retrieving the bait slowly across the

bottom. Cast twice to positions: 10 o'clock, 12 and 2. Always be sure to have your line tight to your bait so you can feel bites. Once a fish bites, reel as quickly as possible and lift your rod. With super sharp hooks this is all you'll need to engage the fish.

By using the "fan casting" method you'll cover considerable surface area as you "search" for fish. Fan casting allows you to bisect troughs and holes that have formed underwater. These areas are where fish hide and feed under the pounding surf.

I fan cast three times in succession and if no bites, I move on down the beach. Use this technique to cover large areas of sand. Once you find the fish continue with Gulp! or switch to a live bait to try to pick off the biggest fish out of the school.



Weed-less Presentation

When fishing Gulp! near rocks we switch our technique up a bit by going weed-less. Fish congregate very near where rock meet sand and more likely between submerged rocks. That's why when

fishing near jetties, harbor entrances and offshore rocks it's very important to fish right up against where rock meets sand. It's at this edge that fish feed and lay in waiting for their next meal.

By fishing a lighter sinker, shorter leader and setting our Gulp! up with weed-less rigging, this technique allows the angler to get closer to the rocks, with less chance of snagging, where the biggest fish live.

Storing Gulp! (Including the ones used for bait) is easy and convenient. Just place them back into the zip top packet and close. I always keep that package in a larger zip bag in case they leak. Try not to leave them in your car where they may get hot or be in direct sunlight. Berkley also makes a tub of worms that is great to keep your Gulp! in before and after fishing-- with plenty of coating and a screw top lid— it's much recommended!

