

Getting the most out of BOILIES

Since their invention in the late 1970's, boilies have become the undisputed king of baits for many carp anglers around the world. They have tremendous advantages over other kinds of bait and we asked Lewis Read to explain the various methods he uses to get the best out of the boilie.

The boilie is simply a mixture of different powdered foods (the base mix) that are mixed with eggs and fish 'attractors' to form a paste that can then be rolled into small balls. These balls of paste are boiled for a minute or two during which time the egg in the paste cooks, resulting in hardened baits that are better at withstanding the interest of smaller fish species, but which are easily chewed up by the carp's throat (pharyngeal) teeth. The bigger the bait, the more selective the bait will be in most circumstances. If you make your own baits this can be done very easily by simply using a larger diameter rolling table to make boilies up to 24mm in diameter. Proper donkey chokers!!

These days there are a vast number of colours, flavours, shapes and sizes available readymade. All of which offer the angler baits that are packed with attraction to stimulate the fish into eating them. They are also designed to be highly nutritious to the fish, making them beneficial for the carp's health and more effective as a source of food. As such the fish will grow increasingly more aware of the bait over time as they eat more and more of it.

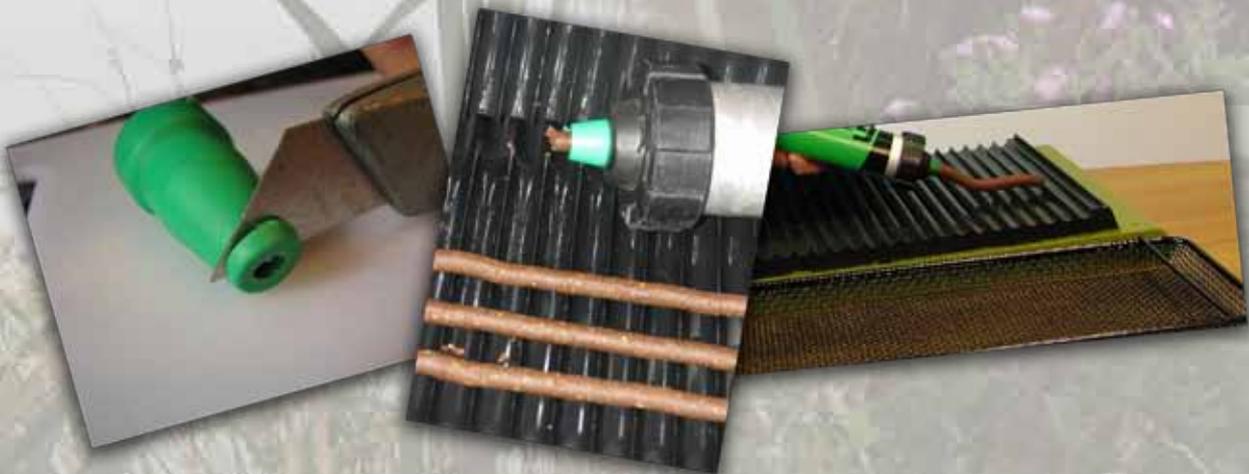


The most popular shape is a sphere because it is perfect for allowing accurate baiting with catapults and throwing sticks. Nice round baits tend to fly straighter, especially with throwing sticks that spin the bait as they are accelerated and flung out into the lake. Luckily this shape of bait also works exceedingly well with modern rigs. In fact considering the way perfectly round baits sit on the hair rig, and the way that baited rigs land on the lake bed, I am in little doubt that there are clear advantages to perfectly round boilies. If the bait turns or twists on the hair, it won't make much difference to its position relative to the hook.



If the fish in your waters have been pressured (i.e. fished for a long time by a lot of anglers), then changing the shape and size of the bait may catch the fish off guard. In this case you can use bigger or smaller baits than those commonly used by other anglers on your venue. A good idea, to vary the shape, is to try extruding the sausage with a bait gun then boil and chop it up into disks or tubes that allow more flavours to flood out.

Convenience apart, many anglers relish the sense of achievement of having caught carp on baits they have designed and made from scratch. There is a wealth of information in magazines and on the internet to give the novice a good grounding to start in the world of bait making. Gardner supply a range of bait making products from low cost boilie Sausage Guns to the efficient Rolaball Baitmaster rolling tables, that can roll a great many baits at a time. Check out the Gardner baitmaking demo videos on their website (and on YouTube) as an excellent source of information and advice.



Making your own boilie may require a little elbow grease, but the finished product will be unique to you, and if you are lucky you could end up with bait that is a phenomenal fish catcher. You have the power to choose the attractors, colour, ingredients, texture and density of your finished boilie, giving you the opportunity to tweak and customise the bait over time to really suit your own requirements.



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For short trips keep your bait fresh by storing it in a bag with insulation – there are some that are available in the Gardner luggage range that are perfect for this; the insulated Bait Buckets that comes with a freezer block or the new Pop Up/Bait Bag that takes 6 pots of hook bait and has a separate freezer compartment that takes up to 3Kg of boilies.

For fishing away from home for any period of time, air-drying baits is particularly useful. If you lay your bait out on air dry trays in a dark and well ventilated location, the moisture content will rapidly reduce to the point that it prevents moulding of the bait, therefore extending the shelf life. It helps to shake the baits around on the tray regularly (say in the morning and then in the evening) to ensure that even drying takes place, and when you are fishing the bait should be kept in a well ventilated, dry, shaded spot in an open mesh Air-Dri Bag. Gardner supplies these in 1kg and 5kg sizes. This will keep the bait in pristine condition until it is time to use it.



Either use the boilies straight out of the bag when frozen, or re-hydrate air-dried baits in some lake water for a few hours before use, to reactivate the active ingredients. Some anglers actually take this opportunity to boost the attractors in the bait by adding some additives to the water to compensate for attractors that may have evaporated out of the bait during drying. Be sure to keep levels low as too much flavour will not help the bait either.

Both pop up (buoyant) and bottom bait hook baits may be boosted to help fish home in on a scent trail. Again, be wary of overloading with synthetic flavours, it is much easier to use natural additives rich in attractive amino acids like liquid liver and liquid fish proteins, or alternatively refined fish oils.

Alternatively, attractive boilie paste can be moulded around the hook baits to offer a greater flavour trail for the fish to detect. Like a shark following the scent of blood in the sea, a carp's super sensitive olfactory glands (the organ they use for their combined sense of smell and taste) will lead it to the source of the delicious aroma.



Rigs wise, the use of buoyant 'Pop up' hook bait, whether it is a boilie or any alternative bait, allows the angler greater control over the way the finished rig settles on the lake bed. For example, the buoyancy of the hook bait can make the hook stand up straight if you want it to and this means that the rig can function extremely effectively. It also means that when the fish sucks at the bait, even if it is being cautious in its feeding, the hook will be more likely to enter the fish's mouth far enough for the hook to do its job! The combination of these benefits ensure more pick ups are converted into positive bites, and the resulting hook holds will be firmer giving rise to more fish in the net.

As a rough guide I would offer the following advice when choosing whether to use pop up, balanced or bottom bait boilie:

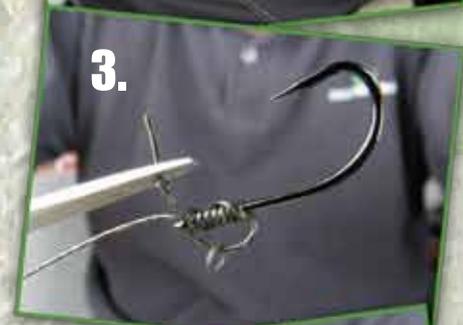
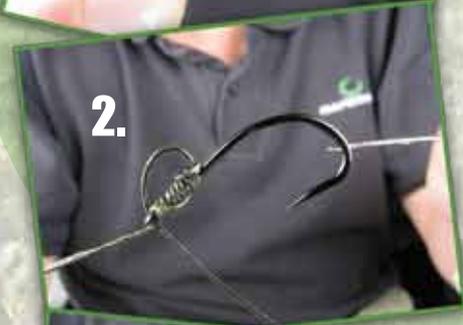
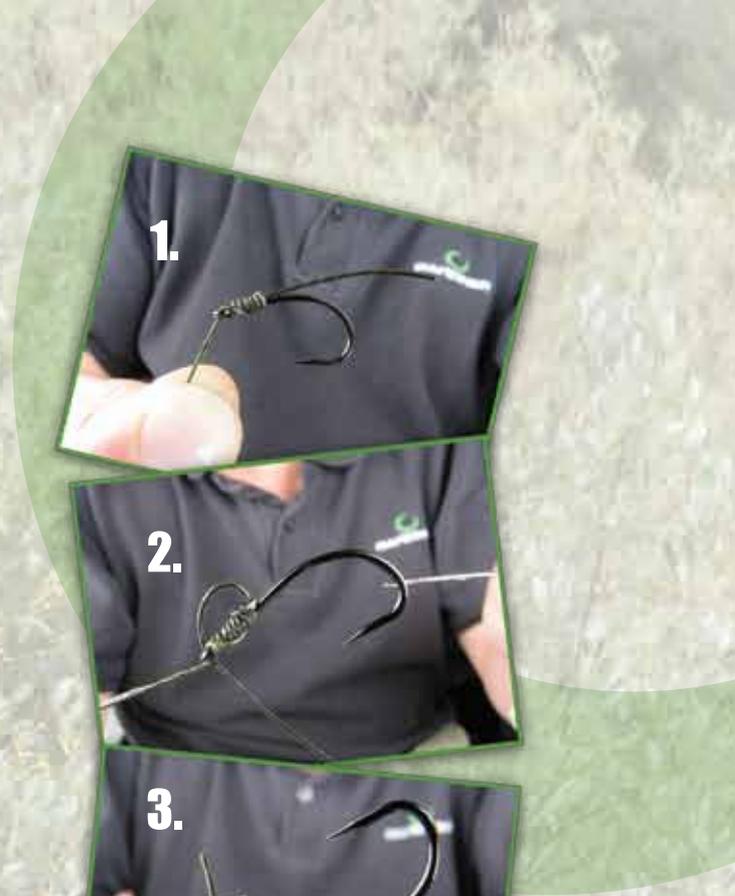
Pop up rigs use a buoyant hook bait and a tungsten putty (Critical Mass) counter balance weight moulded onto the hook link an inch or two away from the hook, controlling the distance the pop up settles above the lake bed. They are ideally suited to waters that have seen little angling pressure, have weed present or substantial depth variations. The fish will be used to picking up food items at different levels and will not recognise the pop up as being unnatural. Generally, pop up hook baits work best with a wider pattern of boilies. Have a look at this very effective pop up rig that offers supremely effective hooking potential and which is easy to tie.



Slow sinking, balanced bottom baits like snowman presentations, offer a subtle means of presenting bait tight to the lake bed, and can be used in almost any circumstances. Unlike pop up rigs, they really come into their own in waters that have seen a bit of fishing pressure, where the fish may be wary of eating angler's bait. Because they weigh less than a standard boilie of the same size, they take a lot less suction to fly into the fish's mouth. This means that hook holds are further back and the action tends to spook the fish into running, giving you a much more positive bite.

A simple but effective presentation is the 'D' rig, using either Subterfuge or Mirage Fluorocarbon or a standard nylon hook link such as HydroFlex (most mainlines can be used very effectively!).

Straight out of the bag, bottom bait hook baits are excellent for fishing boilies in silt or when the fish are feeding hard on mass particles. This is because they have their heads tight on the lake or river bed (or even in the silt) and you want the bait to be down at the correct level. In both these scenarios there is no point in having the bait wafting up several inches above the fish's mouth as it's very unlikely to be eaten until the majority of the bait in the swim has been eaten and the fish are picking off the remnants. For standard bottom baits, soft braided hook links or a partially stripped skinned hook link with a conventional knotless knotted hook and hair, are very effective and very simple to tie.



Almost as important as the rigs used when boilie fishing, is the application of the bait, both before and after fishing. The great thing about a good quality boilie is the more regularly you use it, the more the fish will recognise it, and the greater the association of the boilie as being a food source. This in itself will mean the fish will be more likely to feed confidently in a manner that will lead to them being caught!

Always buy the best bait you can afford, and if possible form a team with like minded anglers that will use the same bait. This way you will be working together to create a situation in which your bait is the one that the carp want to eat more than any other. If this is achieved they will search for your bait, swimming past other angler's baits to get to yours, and then feeding with such confidence that they become much easier to hook. When this happens expect many more red letter days than blank days....



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