



 **SHAUN HARRISON**
BAIT QUEST

Particle Fever

Since the late '70s one method has made a lasting impression on carp fishing... the application and understanding of particle use!

Carp can get really preoccupied on small beds of particle baits.



Here we are into part seven of my Bait Quest series and this month I want to look at yet another aspect of carp fishing that tends to be overlooked – the world of particle fishing. Particle fishing appears to be yet another dying art in this carp fishing world in which we live.

Apart from the occasional angler fishing tiger nuts over tiger nuts (or more often hempseed), when was the last time you saw someone with a small tub of beans, or peas, fishing the same over the top of a light baiting without a boilie in sight?

Yes, I see loads of anglers piling in different particles, but rarely see them fishing a particle bait amongst a particle bed.

I must admit to being a little guilty of this myself, despite using particles an awful lot, and to very good effect in the late-'70s/early-'80s. Particle baits were, and still are, very affordable baits compared to many of the boilies and pellets more commonly used.

So, let us start by clarifying what I term as particle baits. It can be argued that any small boilie, pellet, or any other small bait for that matter, can be rightly classed as a particle bait, but for the simplicity of this article, every time I refer to particles I will be referring to beans, peas, seeds and/or nuts.

Particle baits may not be the most effective type of baits for piling the weight on the fish, but carp do like to have a good old munch on them and I would even go as far as saying that during the warmest of the weather you are more likely to get a little bit of action over a bed of particles than you will over a bed of boilies. As long as you don't go silly in the baiting up stakes, properly prepared particles can be an

incredibly useful alternative food source that the carp enjoy feeding on with less caution than some of the more conventional baits.

So many anglers use particles simply as a carpet feed, then fish boilies over the top, but few, as I have already mentioned, go on to fish a particle on the Hair. If only you knew, or could see, just how many extra pick-up chances you are missing out on by keeping boilies on the end of the rig.

Carp will be far less suspicious of particles than boilies, and will therefore be on them much quicker

During this series of Bait Quest articles I have drawn the reader's attention to the excellent Korda Underwater videos – or, for the under 30s out there, DVDs; sorry, I'm a little old-fashioned. One only has to watch for a short length of time to realise what some anglers have known for years – that carp will be far less suspicious of particles than boilies, and will therefore be on them much quicker.

This is so easily turned to the angler's advantage by still introducing a few boilies into the baiting strategy but offering a particle bait on the Hair. Give them something to concern themselves about. Use the carp's intelligence against themselves (a favourite phrase of mine), they can inspect those boilies as much as they like, because while they worry about the boilies, the particle gets sucked in. Sounds simple doesn't it? Well, give it a go.

Preparation

Correct preparation of particles is absolutely essential. Beans and peas are just like all other seeds. They are in a dry state waiting for the chance to regrow. Plant the various raw seeds and beans and you will be surprised how quickly they start to sprout. Tares, which I have growing around my pool at home, make quite a nice colourful plant. I have mentioned this merely to stress the need for correct preparation. The seed, bean, or pea basically requires killing off to prevent it from swelling and possibly growing inside the fish or around the lake.

Basically speaking, the larger the particle, the longer it will require soaking and cooking to ensure you can fish with peace of mind that no harm is going to come to anything eating it.

I like to soak all particle baits for a minimum of 24 hours before cooking, regardless of their size. I prefer to use pond or lake water for this job. This presoak period allows the baits to swell fully before the cooking commences, and also saves on cooking time. Remember to leave plenty of room in the soaking vessel to allow for swelling and also put in plenty of water for the seed to soak up. Baits such as whole maize, tigers, and some of the beans will absorb a lot of liquid. Start off with around twice as much liquid as bait then check it after a few hours to make sure it doesn't need topping up. If the bait soaks up all the water and swells above the water line then you aren't really soaking it any more. Keep in enough water to completely cover the bait, and check the water level is higher than the depth of bait whilst cooking it.

MAKE THE HEADLINES

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Bingo Fins !

Fatty foods make fish...fat.



Heavy weed !

Congestion on the main bar...



Friday,
June 3rd, 2007
34 pages

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'The best of everything that goes on in ponds of the world since 1854'

New Sufix Camfusion causes mass carp confusion!



by Isaac Walters,
Daily Pond

Rumours are circulating that Sufix has a new addition to their highly effective range of skinned hooklinks that are being used by increasing numbers of the anglers that visit our lakes and rivers. Reports indicate that 'Camfusion' has already been responsible for the capture of many of our larger residents, all of which have vigorously denied these allegations

claiming they had no idea that their dinner was attached to anything untoward. All the victims of this subtly disguised hooklink stated that it wasn't until they were smiling for the cameras that they realised what was going on! With exceptional abrasion resistance, even 'Farquhar the Fat Forty' – our resident leviathan – couldn't bust it up, later declaring, "I never stood a chance". The authorities are investigating.

Fatty foods linked to bingo fins!

by David Grayling
Daily Pond

Researchers at the Institute of Fish Obesity today revealed

long term study into pellet fed juveniles and deduced that big, fat, oily bingo fins were the least of the problem.

Lines So Tough they just don't shred!

by Keith Bream
Daily Pond

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As a general rule of thumb, and one which is very easy to remember, first soak your particles for 24 hours, bring them to the boil and simmer for 30 minutes. This should be long enough for all particle baits.

Smaller seeds can be cooked in less time (around 20 minutes) but you are much better off and much safer to overcook than undercook. With hard, dense baits, such as whole maize and tiger nuts, it is essential to soak and cook for the full suggested time.

You can prepare small batches of bait at home in a simple saucepan. Years ago I purchased a chip pan and mesh basket for particle preparation at home, then slowly progressed to a Burco boiler, which made life much simpler. For home particle preparation a simple plug-in Burco boiler is probably the most convenient to use. You can often pick up good second-hand Burcos for not a lot of money. Most will only have been used for boiling water so will not need decontaminating before use for bait purposes. Keep it clean inside and it will last for years. I still have my original one that I purchased many years ago, in fact it still gets used occasionally at Quest Baits if we have just a relatively small amount of bait that requires cooking.

You will find a fine mesh basket to be so useful used in conjunction with whatever you choose for the boiling vessel. This is the reason I originally started to use a chip pan (with mesh inner). It makes the transferring of cooked bait to bucket so much easier and safer, not having to pick up a heavy, and often very hot, container of water. Mesh size doesn't necessarily have to be smaller than the bait as the weight of the bait inside tends to stop much of it from escaping.

Once the main bulk of bait is removed, then the weight aspect is reduced, and I use an extending sink sieve over a bucket and sieve out any last bits of bait. This is added back to the main bait, and then the liquid is poured back into the particles to keep them moist.

Many particle baits will float if allowed to dry out too much. I found this to my cost in the late-'80s after I had dried off some bait in warm weather to allow me to PVA bag it. I was fishing Patshull Church Pool at the time and was too mean to waste a bag by dropping it in the edge to see what it looked like. Suffice to say, I spent a few weeks PVA-bagging with single hookbaits and no freebies, as the seeds, beans and peas that I had mixed were floating after the PVA had melted. I only found this out when

Soaking Particles

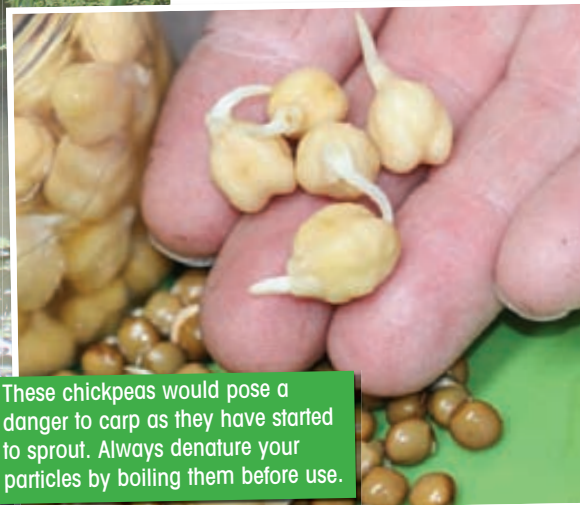


When soaking tigers always check the water level. The tigers in picture A have been soaking for 12 hours and already have taken on a lot of water in the rehydrating process. In picture B Shaun is topping up the water level to allow the tigers a further 12 hours of soaking.

dropping a rig in a hole in some pads close in on a local pool, and, horror of horrors, all the free baits popped to the surface moments after positioning the rig. Did I feel a prat or what?

For what it is worth, these baits were only left on a towel for around five or six hours – it had never occurred to me that they would float.

The moral to this story? Make sure you drop everything in the edge for a look before committing several days to a method!



These chickpeas would pose a danger to carp as they have started to sprout. Always denature your particles by boiling them before use.



The good old Burco boiler, the ideal appliance for boiling off particles. You can pick these up at car boot sales for a few pounds.

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Large Particles

Let us now take a look at a few of the particles I have had success on over the years.

Sweetcorn



What can I say about sweetcorn? Carp absolutely love the stuff, yet I would guess that on many waters they haven't been fished for with simple corn over corn for many years. It's a brilliant bait for putting little traps in the edge, and it's easy to keep checking due to its easy-to-see colour. Yes, carp do eventually take fright of the bright colour, but this is no big deal as corn can be easily dyed a different colour if required. I prefer using it out of the tin rather than frozen from the supermarket.

Go on, I dare you to put a couple of grains on a Hair Rig and cast out with three catapult pouches scattered over the top. No need to find a gravel bar, hump, hard patch or anything else. You may just find you have stumbled across a wonder bait! If you do, mine's a Guinness in the winter or a cider in the summer.

Chickpeas



So-called because they look like an oven-ready chicken! This was one of the first particle baits I ever used and I caught loads of carp on them. Over the years several bait companies have sold bags of these, flavoured and dyed, although I always used to use them simply cooked and not flavoured or dyed. As they are quite a dense bait, they can be catapulted a fair distance.

Black-eyed Beans



Another one from my early years. These I do prefer to dye and flavour. Because they are a bean, they take on quite a bit of liquid, thus soak up a flavour really well. The hero of my youth, Rod Hutchinson, used these to great effect at Redmire Pool (amongst many other waters) cooked in tomato soup. This sends them nice and orangey. It is worth repeating a quote from Rod's brilliant book *The Carp Strikes Back*:

"Next to sweetcorn, probably the most successful

nationwide particle. I personally rate them higher than corn, having caught carp from every conceivable type of water on them."

What more can I say, other than most carp these days won't have come across a black-eyed bean for many a year?

Pinto Beans



Something I so rarely hear of anyone using, yet in the past I caught a lot of carp on them. These are larger than a black-eyed bean and are brown in colour once cooked. These again take a flavour well, if required.

Maple Peas



Another absolutely devastating bait that is on the secret list of a few anglers, even to this day. It's quite a dense bait that can be catapulted quite well and sinks fairly quickly. I prefer to use maples after a few days when they start to develop a slightly stronger aroma. I have never bothered to flavour maple peas. Carp love them the way they are.

Whole Maize



Looks like big, hard sweetcorn. It's one of the cheapest baits available and absolutely devastating on some waters. I must admit it is a bait I have hardly ever bothered with, but I have to talk about it due to the incredible number of fish it has accounted for on some waters. (I don't think I am allowed to mention the secret Bedfordshire clay pit where many anglers pretend they have actually caught on boilies!)

I have fished waters where I have struggled to catch with maize, yet I have been on other waters where I have had anglers at the side of me absolutely hammer the carp with it. Give it a go and decide for yourself.

Tiger Nuts



Many anglers will argue it is the best bait they know, and, given the choice of just one bait forever more, then it would be tiger nuts. High praise indeed, yet tiger nuts are another bait I have hardly used over the years. It seemed at one time that almost every angler I saw would have them on at least one rod. I guess it is because of this that I have hardly bothered to use them. I have always been quite a stubborn individual and refuse to conform. If I can do things differently, then I try to. I guess this is the reason I have messed around with different baits so much over the years, constantly striving for something different to everyone else.

Carp love tiger nuts – fact. They are one of the few particles that come in different sizes, from mini tigers right through to jumbo tigers. For the small amount of tiger fishing I do, I prefer the mini sizes and think the carp do too. I am convinced that the crunchability aspect of tiger nuts is their number one attraction to the carp. I like to scrape/nibble the skin off my hookbait just to make it stand out amongst the free offerings a little more. A couple of broken bits of tiger nut can be devastating. Carp don't crunch tigers to a pulp and don't digest them that readily, which means that they swim around after eating them, excreting bits of tiger nut. In effect they keep baiting up for you. I would guess most bits of tiger nut get eaten more than once!

Other Nuts



I have caught on quite a few different nuts over the years. After the great peanut debate of a few years back, peanuts have now been banned on many waters. The main problem with peanuts is that there are some very cheap and inferior nuts available at silly cheap prices (from the pet world), thus cheap prices tend to mean more going into a water, and this is where the problems start. Peanuts can be very dangerous to the carp, especially if not cooked properly,



It was the great Rod Hutchinson who pioneered particle fishing back in the '70s.

but in sensible three-catapult pouchful amounts they will do very little harm. As with sweetcorn, you really don't need to pile in peanuts.

Almonds, hazels, cashews, Brazils, and walnuts have all caught a lot of carp for me. These are all a little cost-prohibitive to use in large amounts, and, again, I have never bothered. A few scattered around with the same bait fished on the Hair is all that is required.

Mass Bait Scatter Particles

All the baits mentioned so far are easily presented on the Hair, or hook, in some cases. The following baits can be used as hookbaits, but you are advised to be careful to balance your hook first, to allow the bait to behave a little more naturally.

Hempseed



My favourite bait of all-time and one that I would feel totally lost without. I have definitely used more of this over the years than any other bait because carp love it. Once cooked it looks like you are walking around with a bucketful of freshly hatched coots with little white beaks!

Ah, have I stumbled across something here? Is hempseed actually coot seed? Does it hatch and turn into cootlets if not eaten? That would explain why some lakes have flocks of the little black attitude-problem boilie-eating birds!

Hemp works no matter what you do to it; straight out of the pan hot, left to start to turn, or combined with an extra taste such as curry, chilli, tuna, etc. It's available in small or large size, and, again, I prefer the small. It is worth shopping around for hemp because some varieties are much more effective than others. I can actually buy hempseed at a retail price, which is lower than the price I pay for the stuff that I sell. There is a reason why I pay more – the carp prefer it.

The better the hemp, the quicker it will split. Once cooked, I prefer to freeze hempseed before use, as I find it helps to release even more natural attraction into the water.

Buckwheat

This is black in colour with slightly squared sides, and a little larger than hempseed. Once cooked this will split to reveal a white shoot – similar to hemp. It's a useful bait on the waters where the carp have seen everything, and is similar in appearance to a small snail, nice and dark in colour.

Tares

Another of my all-time favourites. A brilliant bait when the fish have seen a lot of hemp and you feel they may be shying away from it. It has a lovely strong, natural flavour which the fish immediately associate with food; a very unfashionable bait, although I have yet to find a carp that doesn't like tares. Their relatively dark colour can be more beneficial for baiting margin areas you wish to keep your eye on, as others

don't notice the baits there. This is the problem with a lot of baits. Get an area going and visited by the carp regularly, and everyone knows the area because they see your bait. Sometimes a little craftiness is quite essential.

Wheat



I love wheat; it is the first bait on which I managed to get the carp going in the winter, on the River Trent. Sweetcorn fished over wheat worked from the start when I first fished for them in the early-'80s. They just didn't want to know about boilies – although they would accept paste. I like to flavour wheat, although this isn't essential. A very useful bait if you are fishing to a tight budget – it can be any colour you wish, and any flavour.

Groats



Left a couple of days before use, groats give off a lovely thick cloud into the water, absolute minimum preparation time is required for these. In fact there is no need to presoak groats. Bring them to the boil, simmer them for a short time, and then take them off the heat. They will be ready to use. Over the years some very big carp have slipped up on baits fished over a carpet of groats.

Dari Seed

Available in red, and the slightly more expensive white. I have always used it mixed half and half, and like to use it after at least a week of soaking when it gets a distinctive cheesy aroma to it. It's another bait I don't see used, or hear mentioned, a great deal, yet it gets used a lot in the mixed seed mixes that everyone seems happy to purchase. So, a lot more carp get caught on dari seed than you would perhaps first imagine.

Mixed Seed Blends



These do tend to be popular. Some anglers choose to buy ready-mixed birdfood diets, such as the various pigeon conditioner mixes. I prefer to blend my own with seeds I know the carp definitely like. Most bait companies offer their own blended seeds, from the famous Partblend of Hinders through to many other mimicked (by name rather than seed content) products from various companies.

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A superb carp caught over a bed of particles.



Mixing several particle seeds together can often lead the carp into dropping their guard as they get preoccupied grubbing around on the bottom.

In Conclusion

Many years ago I discovered the carp's love of blended particles. These days it is rare for me to use just one choice of particle at a time in a carpet-feed situation, although I am more than happy with just a couple of catapult pouchfuls of one bait in a semi-stalking situation.

I like to have different-sized baits, different textures, and different colours mixed together. This, I find, encourages more fish to actually drop down and sample a bit of what you are offering. We all know once you have them feeding they often carry on feeding and will eventually mop up everything in the vicinity.

I turned up on one trip with a mixture of two different types of bean, two peas, two nuts, and two different seeds. I never looked back.

Patshull Park Church Pool was the first place where I discovered how effective blends of particles could be. I turned up on one trip with a mixture of two different types of bean, two peas, two nuts, and two different seeds. I never looked back.

Many of the well-known seed mixes have an aniseed oil coating, which gives them a distinctive smell. Many anglers who ring me asking about my mixed blends ask if I have the aniseed bits in! Well, I offer both – with or without.

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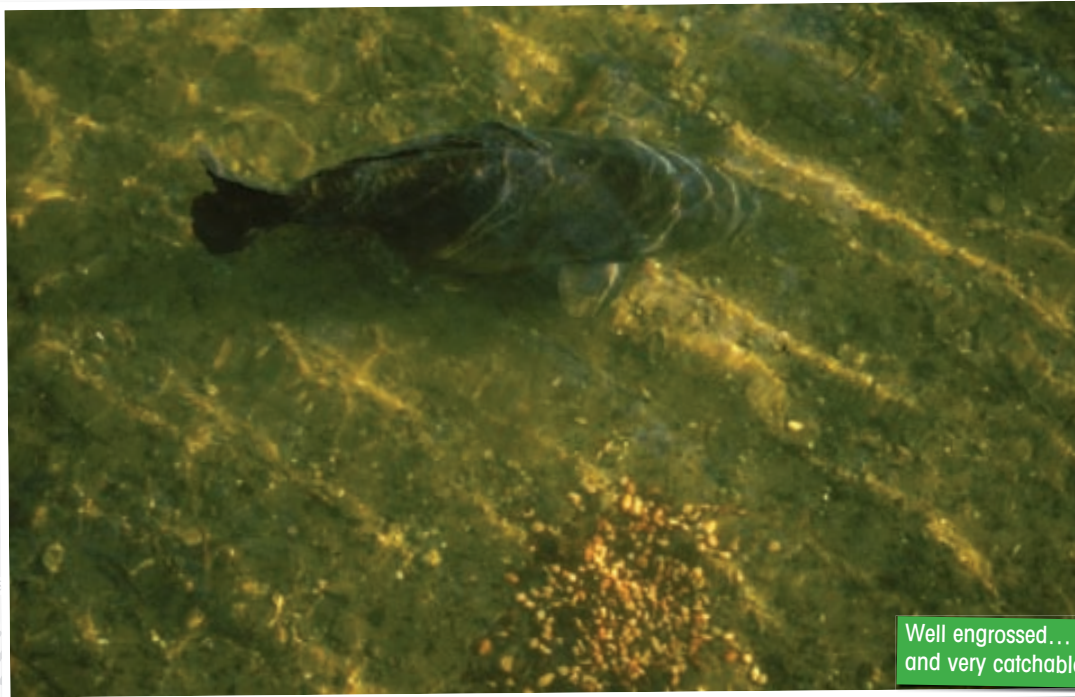
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Well engrossed... and very catchable.

A lot of the mixed seed mixes are quite bright in colour, containing many light coloured seeds such as millet, white dari seed, etc. On some waters this can spook the fish, so a change to a darker seed mix can make all the difference.

There are many more different particle baits which will, and have, caught a lot of carp. I have simply highlighted the ones I consider to have been most important to me over the years. As I said at the beginning of this piece, most anglers never realise the full potential of particle fishing simply because they use particles as a background carpet feed rather than a bait in its own right.

The amount of bait used these days has got out of hand on some waters, and particles always seem to be the things abused in these situations. Again, the cost allows it. Just remember, though, before you start ladling the bait in, that yes, the fish may well feed on it, but you are reducing the chances of them pricking themselves properly by the mere fact that a lot of bait means the fish don't have to move far between each mouthful, which, in turn, means less chance of them actually pricking themselves on a fixed rig. If the carp aren't moving along the bottom searching out more scarce baiting patches, then they

Just think about it. Most waters have been baited up with particle baits for years, yet the carp never get hooked on them, as most anglers insist on using relatively large boilie hookbaits

particle baits on as hookbaits.

Okay, so the carp's weights are going to suffer if everyone starts using particles all through the summer months, but do you know what? The winter fishing would be far better after a year of particle munching rather than pigging out on high-fat, high-oil content fishmeal pellets and boilies. Is weight gain necessarily the best option? Generally speaking, who are the healthiest and fittest people – the thin ones or the fat ones?

Best fishes.

Patshull success back in the late-'80s.



Hemp pellets, don't ignore them as they catch a lot of carp when used as a bed of feed mixed with hemp and other particle seeds.

have time to realise that that last mouthful wasn't as they had expected, and they have all the time in the world to eject it.

Before signing off I will once again state that the maximum potential of many particle-feeding situations is unlikely to be fully realised whilst you have a boilie or a pop-up on the end of your rig.

The time could be here for a minor particle revolution. Just think about it. Most waters have been baited up with particle baits for years, yet the carp never get hooked on them, as most anglers insist on using relatively large boilie hookbaits. Stick a couple of boilies into your carpet of particles for the fish to fret over and keep the small