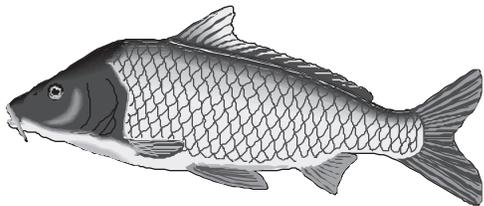


# HOOK N' COOK

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## Carp

### *The Forgotten Immigrant of the Fish World*



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Mention a fish which can be classed as the most elusive, sagacious and difficult fish to catch and the average angler will immediately think of Trout. However, there is another much-maligned species that is also deserving of this status: the exotic Carp. Carp are hardy and scrappy, with a marked disdain for artificial lures and an unwillingness to "wolf" down a bait. These fish prefer to cautiously mouth and tease the bait before taking it. Although they tend to be overlooked by the average angler, these characteristics make the Carp a good sport fish.

The Carp has not always been overlooked. In fact, at one time they were very much in demand. Carp are not a native fish: they were first stocked in North America in the 1880's by the U.S. Fish Commission following several

requests. No doubt these requests came from immigrants who remembered the fine flavour of a fish that had found its way to their dining tables as a Christmas Eve delicacy. Once introduced from Europe, the Carp readily took to American waters and spread prolifically. As a result of stocking in North Dakota, the fish were able to proliferate into the Red River: Manitoba's first Carp was caught in 1938. Since that date, with few natural predators, the Carp has become over-abundant.

Over-abundancy has lowered the Carp's status from a fish fine enough to be stocked in the palace ponds of the emperors of the imperial Orient to a fish destined for the garbage heap. Carp feeding habits have also helped to dim their former glory. A bottom feeder who snuffles out food tidbits among aquatic plants, these fish have been blamed for decreasing the populations of other fish and waterfowl. Actually the Carp is not a direct competitor of other fish because they occupy a different ecological niche. Anglers who look beyond the less winsome appearance of Carp - robust body with large scales - will find a coarse-fleshed, good-tasting fish.

### **Fish'n for Carp**

Another plus for the Carp is that they abound in waters not far from the city: these fish are plentiful in the Red and Assiniboine rivers so they are the ideal fish to get after when you want a few hours of casual fishing. Carp can readily be taken from waters within the City of Winnipeg.

Early spring to late fall is the season for Carp; they bite best when the water temperatures range from 1°C to 10°C. In very hot weather





they will be found in 3 to 6 metre depths in lakes. In streams, deep water areas such as those occurring beneath dams are very productive. Carp are a lunch hour fish, taking baits best between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Carp do not localize in schools so if fishing is not good in one spot, it does little good to move to another.

The Carp is not a fussy eater; in fact, someone has said that if these fish could, they would jump right out of the water and join you at your picnic table. Carp are able to differentiate between the same tastes as humans: sweet, sour, salty and bitter. They are omnivorous, so you will have a lot of leeway when it comes to choosing baits. Carp will take: sweet corn, half-boiled potatoes, carrots, or parsnips cut into small balls; small pieces of fish dipped into anise oil; balls of animal fat; boiled-til-soft green peas; cheese, clam; minnows; artificial lures, shiny spinners; and to come to the Carp coup de grace, doughballs.

### Dough Ball



Doughballs seem like a particularly simple concept. After all what could be more simple than a ball of dough? but it is with doughballs that we enter the Carp controversy. The Carp connoisseur has managed to come up with a thousand variations on the basic form: doughballs made from raw dough; doughballs made from half-baked bread; doughballs made from cornmeal; doughballs laced with maple syrup; and even the Marie Antoinette version - one made from cake!! Most have come to agree on

*The following recipe takes advantage of that love for corn:*

*1/2 cup juice from canned corn  
1/4 cup canned corn, crushed  
cornmeal as needed to give a  
thick dough flour as needed to  
give proper consistency*

*Bring corn juice to a boil, stir in crushed corn while boiling, and add corn meal until mass is solid but moist. Remove from heat. Add and knead in flour until the desired consistency is attained. This mixture can be kept for fairly long period in the fridge.*

one point; the Carp has a deep and abiding love for corn.

Using corn balls is just a matter of adjustment, that is learning to adjust the consistency of the dough with water temperature. In very cold waters doughballs will tend to become too hard. In very warm waters they will tend to melt off the hook. It is always wise to take along an extra bit of flour so you can make the dough heavier.

Doughballs should be kept small as you'll be fishing with a number six or eight hook. A doughball about the size of a small marble is just right. Think small with Carp; although they are hefty-looking fish their mouths are small in relation to the rest of their body.

In fact, thinking small is the key when it comes to outfitting your tackle box for Carp: hooks, sinkers and baits should be small. A good all-round hook for Carp is a short-shanked number six or eight single hook. Number 12 treble hooks are the choice when you are fishing streams where there is a chance the current might wash





the doughball away. Sinkers are not essential when lake fishing for Carp: the weight of the doughball should be sufficient to keep the bait on the bottom. In stream fishing, a small bell or slip

sinker should be heavy enough to keep the bait on the bottom. A casting rod with 18 pound test line is a good choice.

In still fishing for Carp, you should cast out the line; straighten out the line; and then play out three or four feet of slack line. The Carp is a very, very cautious biter: they have been observed swimming around a bait for half an hour before taking it. Don't misinterpret their first cautious nibbles; you can not rush them into taking the hook. When they finally decide your offering is worthy of being eaten, they will swallow it with a gulp - you'll feel a definite tug on the line. This is the time to set the hook: not before. The Carp is not noted as an exceptionally scrappy fighter but they do like to make strong bull runs. You may have a 15 minute tussle on your hands before you land it.

There is another method to take Carp, particularly in the spring when they are spawning in shallow water. During spawning, groups of males will gather about in the shallows and periodically expose their backs above the water surface. This is the time for the bow and arrow fisher to go after the Carp.

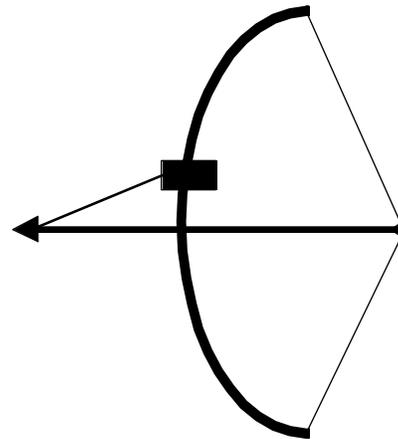
Female Carp are surrounded by two to three males during the spawning act. Females are prolific egg layers. A large female Carp (ten kilograms) will lay as many as two million eggs. It is no wonder then that they have spread prolifically throughout North America.

Carp do not go about the courting ritual in silence: they make a considerable amount of noise as they thrash about. You'll almost be able to locate them by sound when you are stalking

them with bow and arrow. The shallow marshes at the end of the large southern lakes in Manitoba are ideal spots to go after the Carp with a bow. Many of the Carp will be in the seven to nine kilogram range so they offer a good-sized target.

### Bow Fishing for Carp

Bow and arrow fishing requires a lot of advance preparation because the set-up is different than that used for hunting. Any bow that is capable of sending an arrow on a relatively flat flight path for a short distance will be fine. It is best if the bow is made of laminated wood and plastic for this combination is impervious to water and will not warp. The bow must also be reel-equipped so you can retrieve your fish once you have it on the line.



A 12 or 15 cm metal drum attached to the bow (wound with 50 pound test fishing line) will work as a reel.

Of particular importance is the arrow. A fishing arrow must be used because a regular arrow is useless. The fishing arrow differs from a regular arrow because; it is 12 to 20 cm longer in length; the shaft is made aluminum or fibreglass





instead of wood; rubber vanes replace the feather vanes which would not stand up to the water over a long period; the arrow head has a place to attach the line and retractable barbs which prevent the fish from slipping off; and most fishing arrows are constructed so that the shaft will disengage when the fish begins its run.

Bow fishing of Carp may be done from a boat but since they spawn in very shallow waters it is feasible to go after them by wading. Polaroid sun glasses are an essential accessory to bow fishing as glare from the water's surface can affect your aim.

To find out the regulations regarding bow and arrow fishing, check with the Manitoba Sport Fishing Guide and Regulations.

After you have caught a Carp whether by hook or by arrow, the key thing to remember is that Carp, like all fish, are highly perishable. When caught, try to keep them alive as long as possible.

The best method is in a mesh or burlap bag over the side of the boat - another use for old potato sacks. This is preferable to a stringer because fish on a stringer can "drown" - that is they are unable to use their gills efficiently to obtain enough oxygen to survive. In addition, fish should not be hauled for long distances in the hot trunk of a car. They should be gutted, gilled and iced down within a short time of catching. A cooler provides a nice way of storing and transporting the Carp over a long distance.

For more information on these recipes or fishing in general, please contact:

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200 Saulteaux Crescent  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3J 3W3  
Phone: (204) 945-6640*

## **BOHEMIAN GYPSY CARP**

<i>Ingredients:</i>	<i>2 pounds Carp fillets, skinless</i>	<i>salt</i>
	<i>2 strips bacon, diced</i>	<i>2 or 3 onions, minced</i>
	<i>1/4 teaspoon dill seed</i>	<i>1/2 teaspoon paprika</i>
	<i>1 cup sour cream</i>	<i>3 tablespoons cooking sherry</i>
	<i>fresh parsley</i>	

*Cut the Carp into serving pieces. Sprinkle the sides well with salt, covering all sides. Let stand for a half hour.*

*Meanwhile fry the diced bacon; add the onions, dill seed, and sprinkle with paprika. Brown lightly, stirring occasionally.*

*Butter a loaf pan lavishly. Spread fish in a layer in the bottom of the pan, shaking the salt from each piece. Add a layer of the onion-bacon mixture, another layer of fish, and top with remaining onion and bacon. Mix the sherry into the sour cream. Pour half the sour cream mixture over the top and bake in a 425°F oven until the fish flakes. Pour the remaining sour cream mixture over the top and return it to the oven for about five minutes. Garnish with fresh parsley. Serve with baked potatoes. Serves four to six.*

