



SHAUN HARRISON
BAIT QUEST



PASTE... THE FINAL FRONTIER

Shaun Harrison needs no introduction, he's one of the quickest minds in carp fishing and has a depth of knowledge about bait that is second to none. This month Shaun looks in detail at what can be achieved with paste!

MAX 0gms

Paste – have you got the balls?



70gms

Think of a bait that can be any size, any shape, any colour, any flavour, floating, sinking, soft, skinned, air-dried, coated, impregnated, and can be used with the hook buried inside it so that it can be presented on the top of soft weed and silt! Sounds great, doesn't it? So, why is it that I see so few anglers carrying paste, let alone using it? I, for one, would feel lost without a couple of tubs of paste in my pack. There are so many uses for it other than the obvious one, as an alternative hookbait to the more commonly used boilies, particles and pellet. For many years I was a little blinkered into thinking that I could only get away with using paste baits during the colder winter months when nuisance fish become less of a problem. Then again, I only saw paste as a soft mouldable bit of unboiled boilie mix. So, what other variations does paste present, or what else can we do with paste?

What Is Paste?

For the purpose of this article, each time I refer to paste I am relating to the ball of dough-like substance created during boilie-making. This is the soft paste before it is actually rolled out into separate baits and boiled. Paste baits can be made in different ways, using water, or any other liquid come to that. Again, for the purpose of this article, I am referring to pastes made from boilie base mix ingredients, additives and eggs. The few people I do see using paste simply use it as a soft alternative to a boilie. It does, however, offer many advantages to the standard hard-skinned boiled bait. The whole idea of the boilie was to make it difficult for small nuisance fish to eat the baits. By boiling the paste a skin forms on the outside of the bait. If you continue to boil the bait it will become hard all the way through as the egg



Nailed on the paste!



What's your flavour?

(and some of the other ingredients) start to cook and stiffen up, resulting in a hard bait. All very basic stuff I know, but take a step back and re-read what I have just written. Do you really suffer from nuisance fish problems everywhere you fish? Do you use conventional boilies simply because that is what you have used for years? Do you use boilies because they are simply very convenient and fire out a long way? Well, if one of the three aforementioned questions has stirred anything then it may be worth taking a look at a few alternative approaches I use.

So, let's start off with the most basic form of paste fishing – using paste on the Hair instead of a more conventional boilie. This offers many advantages over the standard hard, dry boilie. The simple process of boiling

a ball of paste to form a boilie destroys many of the additives that are added to the mix pre-boiling. Not only this, but some of the more subtle attractors that carp find so appealing are often trapped behind a sealed skin. With standard paste baits, all those expensive bits and bobs that went into the mix remain in the mix and are free to slowly leak out into water surrounding the bait. The mere fact that the bait hasn't been cooked keeps everything more soluble. A piece of paste has so much more pulling power than any boiled bait. However, there is a drawback – small nuisance fish will peck away at the bait until it is small enough to be consumed. This isn't always a bad thing. There is no better feed stimulant I am aware of than other fish actually feeding, the tiny puffs of cloud emitting from a paste bait being harassed by nuisance fish is as good a feeding gong as any I know. So yes, fishing with paste can be an absolute pain with smaller fish present, but there are always a few dodges you can employ.

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Attraction

The simplest and easiest way is to reverse the situation and feed with paste, but fish with a boilie on the Hair amongst the paste. The boilie will be sampled but quickly neglected in favour of all those tasty little morsels the nuisance fish can peck away at. This way you have the full benefit of paste attraction,

but with a boilie on the Hair, which should last until your bait has been wiped out. It is then that the nuisance fish may just start to persevere and play blow football with your hookbait. During the colder winter months, small nuisance species are less of a problem and you may well be able to get away with

paste on the Hair. For years I used to tie a plastic bead or a button onto the Hair Rig then mould the paste around this. It was a method that worked well for so long, simply giving the paste something to grip and mould around. These days I prefer to use a small boilie on the Hair and mould my bait around this. If the nuisance fish do strip the boilie of paste, at least I still have a bait in place. Having said that, I have now caught so many carp on artificial baits I would probably still have caught on a plastic bead or button. Who knows – I probably have!

Just for the sake of keeping things non-boilie-related I tend to offer paste in different shapes and sizes. Some large bits, some small, some round, and some flat. I don't want the carp to truffle up everything with the same amount of suck. By mixing sizes and shapes there is less chance of the carp detecting any extra resistance from the weight of a hook and hooklink. For what it is worth, when boilie fishing I also bait with different-sized baits for the same reason. If I can get away with fishing paste over paste, this would be my preferred method of attack. After all, it isn't completely removed from my years of work in rehydrating boilies back to paste form.

Another basic paste method I employ is rolling the bait as you would in boilie-making, and then simply air-drying it. This ends up as a hard bait that will give a slower leak-off of flavour.

So yes, I know it is hard to believe, but paste baits are actually very attractive to carp and offer advantages that you don't get with a conventional boilie.

Clever Edges

There is so much more to paste, so much more you can do with it. Up to this point I have listed the obvious. Now let us look at a few little dodges where paste can help you put a few extra fish on the bank. One thing paste is incredibly useful for is disguising your hookbait from waterfowl, as well as other anglers.

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Shaun's Fruity Trifle Paste Mix

Ingredients:

** 14oz Base Mix (Shaun has used his Yellow Birdy Base Mix, but he wouldn't tell us what was in it!) Both the enhancer and stimulator are already blended into the base mix. Any good quality base will do for paste making. However, Shaun's tip for winter paste is to avoid Fishmeal mixes. Fishmeal in the summer, Birdfood in the winter.*

** Three eggs*

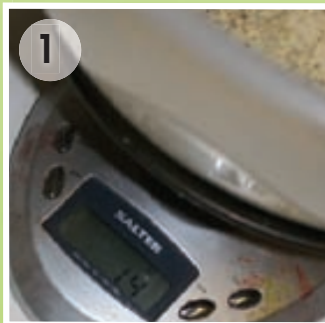
** 1.5ml Sweetener*

** 3ml Fruit Flavour*

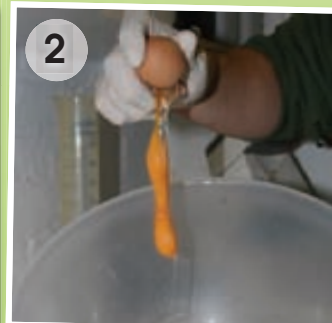
** 3ml Dairy Flavour*

** 3 Drops Fruit Oil*

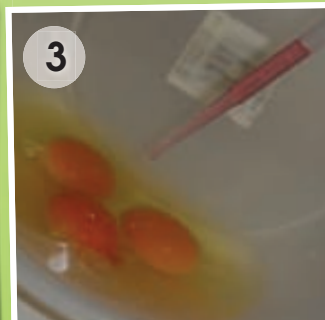
** Eighth of a teaspoon of Colour*



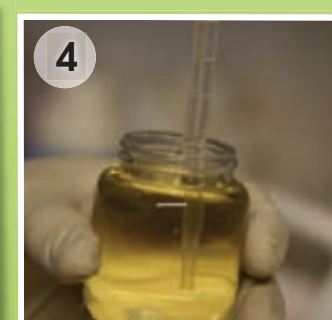
The first job is to weigh out the 14oz of base mix accurately on a set of quality scales.



Next up is to crack three eggs into a clean mixing bowl. Shaun wears gloves to stop any contamination.



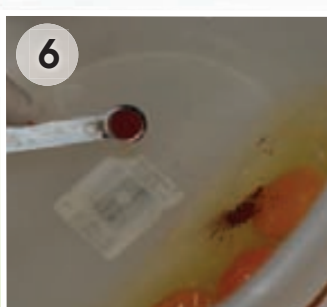
Shaun adds in the Fruit Flavour using a pipette at a rate of 3ml for the three eggs.



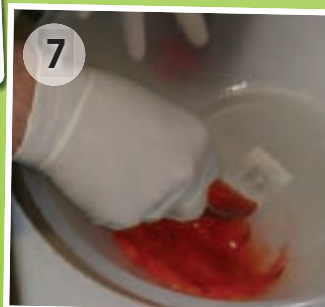
Again, Shaun uses a pipette to add in the Dairy Flavour, again at a rate of 3ml.



Three drops of Essential Fruit Oil are added to maintain a constant flavour in the paste.



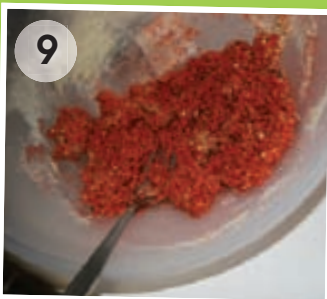
Now it is time to add an eighth of a teaspoon of red-powdered colour to the liquids and eggs.



All the liquids, eggs and powder colouring are now mixed together thoroughly with a fork.



Now Shaun adds two thirds of the measured base mix into the liquid, keeping a little back.



The base mix is slowly mixed into the liquids, again using the fork to bind it all together.



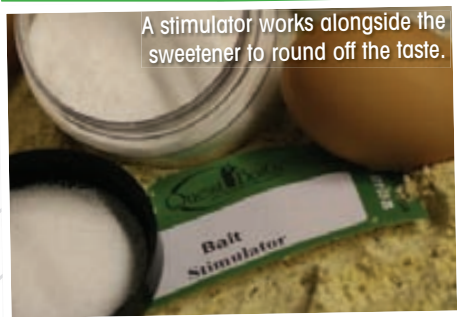
Now the remaining dry mix is added to help soak up any remaining liquid.



The finished paste should be slightly stiff but tacky, and should still hold together.



To keep the paste fresh until you need to use it, label it and then simply freeze it down.

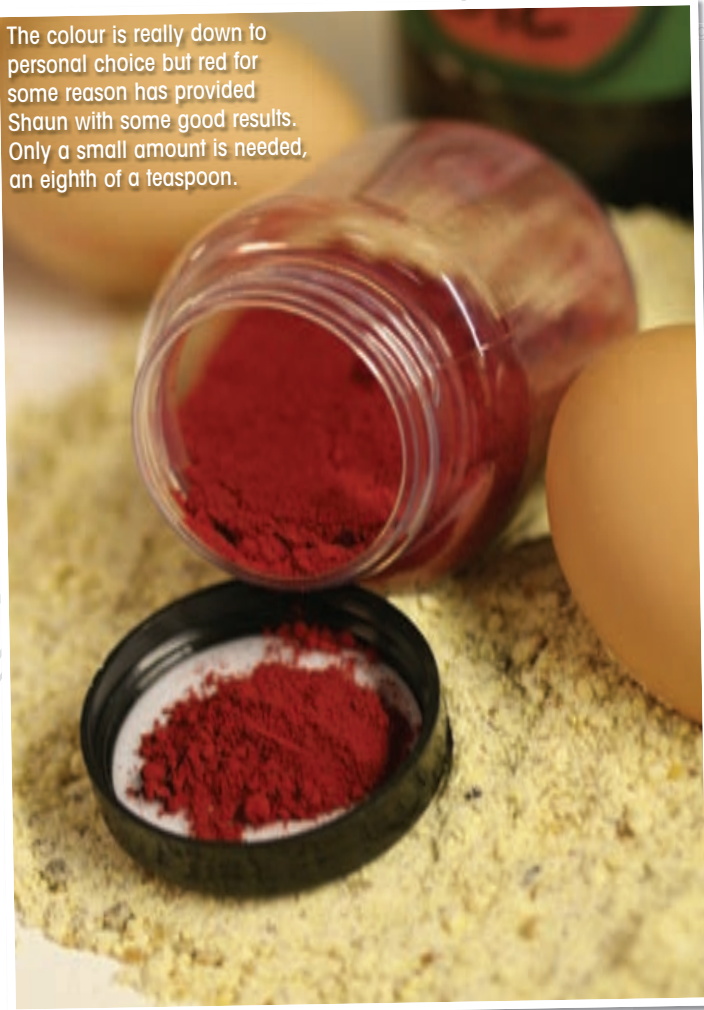


A stimulator works alongside the sweetener to round off the taste.

Particularly on busy waters it can become a problem keeping little tricks up your sleeve to allow yourself long enough to actually benefit from whatever little edge you may have found. Bright hookbaits work incredibly well for periods of time, and then just as quickly stop working. This is usually because everyone else soon jumps on the bandwagon. I mean, isn't it just a little bit obvious when you cast out a fluorescent bait? It can be seen

from quite a distance, therefore from many swims away – not when it is covered in dark paste it can't! The aforementioned situation can also be reversed with a thin coating of bright paste around a dark hookbait. The clever use of PVA as a Hair stop should release the bait during the fight so it isn't hanging there in full view when you come to net a fish. Crafty? Me? Well, sometimes you need to be. I had two brilliant summers

The colour is really down to personal choice but red for some reason has provided Shaun with some good results. Only a small amount is needed, an eighth of a teaspoon.



on gravel. Similarly, a pale-coloured bait that might blend into gravel will stand out against silt. By carrying both light and dark paste around with you it is a simple case of moulding a little paste around the boilie and either fishing it like that, or dropping it into a boiling kettle for a short period to form a hard skin.

Immediately you have an alternative-looking bait. For years I have approached my fishing with the smallest hookbaits possible, truly believing that carp prefer to eat small items. For a long while this chain of thought gave me a massive edge, as most anglers couldn't be bothered to produce tiny baits. It was rare for me to use hookbaits larger than my favourite 10mm. However, small baits are used

more and more these days

and it occurred to me that it was rare to see anyone using larger than 18/20mm on the waters I was fishing. So, for the start of this past summer I decided to start using 22mm baits everywhere. As expected, the bobbins were flying again. Carp fishing can be so simple at times as long as you make an effort to be different and avoid following trends. During one memorable Mangrove session this last summer I had run out of the 22mm hookbaits on which I had been catching. Again, the paste saved the day. It was a simple matter of turning my 18mm hookbaits into 22mm baits simply by rolling the paste around them then dropping them

on the Mangrove fishing with fluorescent bits of plastic over a conventional boilie. Fortunately I got away with it for a couple of years before anyone saw what I was doing. I know only too well that the action wouldn't have carried on as long as it did if everyone had been using the same. Everyone needs a little trick up their sleeve. Edges are hard to gain these days.

Change The Look

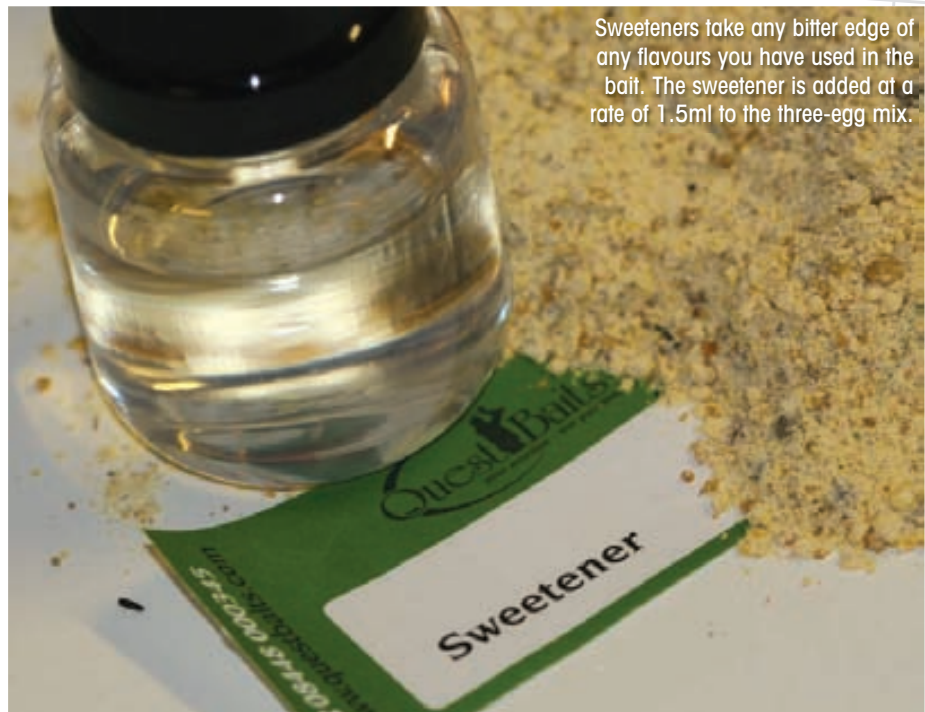
Waterfowl in particular can become a nightmare picking up certain hookbaits. A dark bait that blends into a silt background will stand out like the proverbial sore thumb

Have you ever considered baiting up with Snowman baits? Carp love them and you don't need kilos of the things. They are different enough to create interest and investigation from the carp

in boiling water for a short while to skin them. I could have simply rolled some 22mm balls of paste but I needed to conserve the bit of paste I had. Besides, my 18mm Smokey Fish hookbaits had been sitting in the same glug as the 22mm, so I reasoned the food signals given off would be closer by coating the glugged inner baits rather than offering unglugged 22mm baits. Three carp later and my confidence was still well and truly intact. Similarly, small baits or alternatively-shaped baits can be produced on a whim. I have always done well fishing two barrel-shaped boilies in a 'T' or hammer-head fashion. Fished this way around, the carp seem to have a bit of an imbalance problem when it enters the mouth on a longish Hair. They do seem to have difficulties ejecting these. Very often a subtle change of hookbait shape is all that is needed to get those bobbins moving again. Talking of altering the baits and making them difficult to eject, just start putting your head into gear with long barrel-shaped baits weighted at one end only. With paste you can get your bait behaving just how you want it and you don't have to mess around inserting lead and polystyrene balls, etc. A standard boilie and a pop-up trimmed down, then moulded inside a coating of paste, can make for some rather strange-behaving baits. Have you ever considered baiting up with Snowman baits? Carp love them and you don't need kilos of the things. They are different enough to create interest and investigation from the carp.



The Blended Fruit flavour is put into a bait to provide an initial leak off at a steady rate. This is added at a rate of 3ml to the three-egg mix.



Sweeteners take any bitter edge of any flavours you have used in the bait. The sweetener is added at a rate of 1.5ml to the three-egg mix.

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Shaun's Paste Rig

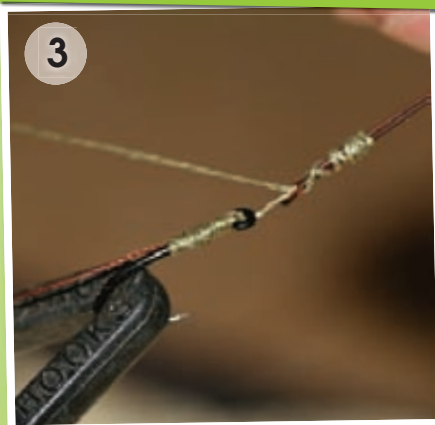
There's nothing too complicated about this rig, in fact it's the rig that Shaun uses for all his carp fishing. Basically it's a combi-rig, but with a slight difference.



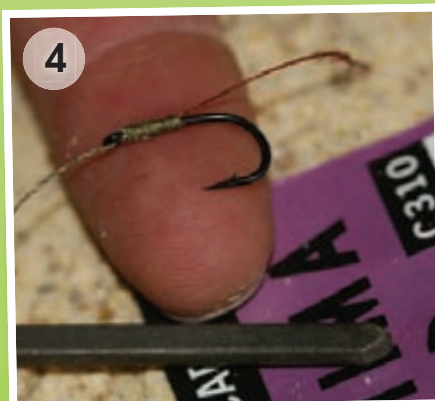
1 Onto an Ashima C310 Size 6 hook Shaun whips on a fine Hair. The Hair is actually a short length of whipping silk.



2 The supple part of Shaun's rig has been created with a Knotless Knot length of Dyneema braid. This is then tied to a stiff boom.



3 The Dyneema braid is fused to the 25lb Maxima boom using the knot shown above, this creates the combi-link.



4 Shaun is adamant that the hook must be very sharp and also clear of any coating. He uses a file to achieve this.



5 A 10mm yellow bead is threaded onto the Hair and trapped in place with a wide Hair stop. This gives the paste something to grip onto.



6 The paste hookbait is moulded between thumb and fingers around the bead so that it completely covers it.



7 This should give you an idea of the size of paste bait that Shaun prefers to use. Note the distance between bait and hook.



8 A standard bottom bait can also be encapsulated in a paste wrap to make the presentation slightly different.



9 For something different a pop-up could also be wrapped in paste, providing a slow leak off for attraction.



Baits out in winter time. Paste, of course!

As I keep saying, it is all about offering the fish a different scenario.

Remember

We must remember that carp live in a watery environment. Everything they eat in the wild is wet. Sometimes they have a crunchy outer, but in the middle the food is very soft indeed. Boilies are dry in the middle for a considerable period of time after being introduced into the water. The harder the baits, the longer they remain dry. It is little wonder that on many waters these days it is unusual to catch within hours of arriving.

Another big 'un falls to the power of the paste.



Carp like soft, wet food and appear to accept and eat it far more quickly than hard dry boilies, be it as a result of flavour-release rate, softness of bait, or whatever else

A classic example of this can be seen by my exploits on the Mangrove the first year I fished it. I never had a fish the first night until I started to use rehydrated boilies, which were, in effect, a boilie which had been in soak for a couple of days – resembling a bait which had been on the bottom for a couple of days. Not only did I start catching carp the first night, I also started to catch the odd one whilst still setting up the other rods! The point I am trying to put across is that carp like soft, wet food and appear to accept and eat it far more quickly than hard dry

boilies, be it as a result of flavour-release rate, softness of bait, or whatever else. You will get action far quicker on paste-type baits than you will on hard, dry boilies.

50/50 or Quality Food Base Mixes

I have, in the past, seen written the suggestion that the cheap 50/50 flavour carrier-type base mixes are perfect for paste fishing. By 50/50 mix I am referring to baits made up from cheap, low food value ingredients, such as various flours and semolina. Now don't get me wrong, ingredients don't have to be expensive to be effective. We must look at what the ingredients do, rather than the cost of them. I personally shy right away from simple flavour-carrier base mixes. It can be argued that this type of mix will be very soft and smooth and release the flavours very quickly, thus making for instant attraction. Now the theory sounds good until you take a step back and think about it. Is instant attraction really what we want to achieve? There is a difference between instant attraction and quick attraction. On most of the waters I fish the carp quickly vacate the area once a lead has gone crashing through the surface. So, the bait is in the swim.

Check out the size of the mouth and think again about the size of your bait.



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Back you go, 'the paste scores again!

Lots of flavour and stimulators are oozing out into the water, quickly spreading around the area the carp have just vacated. Great! Take it to the next stage where most of the soluble ingredients have escaped from the bait and have dispersed into a large area of water. They have now become virtually undetectable and the carp are back in the area. Mmm. Not ideal, but a carp has miraculously found a few pieces of paste and decided to drop down and have a munch. One piece taken and hardly any taste. It may try another piece, but soon it moves on looking for something a little more palatable. Put into easy to understand human terms, it is like someone trying to make a living selling plain unflavoured cooked pasta at the side of an Indian

From the moment a high food value-type bait enters the water, to the moment it totally breaks down, it is still recognisable as food. The profile of a bit of flour and egg with all its original attractive-smelling labels having disappeared doesn't offer a great deal of appeal to anything.

restaurant (or a chip shop if you still prefer old money). The piece of unflavoured pasta is what you are offering when there is a whole world of interesting tastes out there. So, you will have guessed I don't rate highly soluble flavour-carrier bases that much for paste fishing. Everything is speeded up; it's so much quicker when a seal isn't put around the bait.

Quality Food

The clever use of quality food ingredients, stimulators, and flavours, and a little bit of thought when first putting the bait together, can really pay dividends. Let's keep things simple and revisit the scenario mentioned in the last section. The lead has crashed through the surface and the carp have departed. Immediately the most soluble of the liquids you had put into the bait will start to leak out, then some of the thicker ingredients will start to ooze, and the more soluble powders will start to give a tiny clouding effect as the bait starts its slow breakdown process. If the



Paste... not just for small carp.

Bait Quest | Shaun Harrison

baits are left undisturbed for long enough, and the majority of the attractor labels have all escaped the bait, you then have the carefully chosen nutritious base ingredients starting to emit tiny food signals from the soft paste left behind. This is where the quality food ingredients really come into their own. No longer do you have a totally unappetising piece of unflavoured pasta to offer someone for a meal, you still have a proper tasty food morsel. From the moment a high food value-type bait enters the water, to the moment it totally breaks down, it is still recognisable as food. The profile of a bit of flour and egg with all its original attractive-smelling labels having

disappeared doesn't offer a great deal of appeal to anything.

I will sign off now, hoping to have put a few ideas into your head. Boilies are incredibly useful carp-catching aids but are not the be-all and end-all of carp fishing. There are many times when paste will be more useful, or the fish will want particles. Similarly, pellets will undoubtedly have their day, as will maggots, as will floating baits. The only thing we can definitely be sure about is the angler who can adapt and not rely upon one method of fishing to catch his/her fish will undoubtedly catch many more.

NEXT MONTH...

Next month I will look at winter bait choice; what to look for and what to avoid in a bait. Just because one particular bait may be a very good bait during the long warm summer months certainly doesn't mean it will be anywhere near as attractive in the colder water. Until then, best fishes.



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