

Capt. Kerry Wingo Reveals...

The Secrets in his Back Country Tackle Box!

I consider myself very lucky to have grown up in Florida. I have enjoyed fishing since I was old enough to hold a cane pole and now it is my livelihood. I have competed in various tournaments at the professional level, including the IFA Redfish Tour, and I am a flats and back country fishing guide in Key Largo, FL. In the following paragraphs you will find the basics that you need to catch anything from small snapper to 100+ pound tarpon and sharks. I will touch on everything from rods and reels to terminal tackle. I hope you find these tips helpful in building your OWN tackle box.

RODS - The majority of flats and back country fishing can be done with light to medium light action rods. You can't cast a light weight lure or jig with a rod that bends like a pool cue. There are countless rod manufacturers in all price ranges. I truly believe that you get what you pay for in a rod. You need your rod to be light in weight and sensitive. That means graphite! Rod length should be 6 ½' - 7 ½'. Longer rods with a soft or fast tip will add distance to your casts. Look at the number of ceramic guides on the rod. Quality rods will have more guides as a rule of thumb. When targeting tarpon and sharks, that's when you want to move up to the medium heavy to heavy rod. These heavier rods provide lifting power and will have the backbone you need to put maximum pressure on a big fish. Again, light weight graphite! My rod company of choice is Falcon Graphite Rods. Their Coastal Series offers a wide variety of both spinning and casting rods and they are made in the U.S.A.

REELS - Since you are going to be using a light weight rod, it only makes sense to match it with a light weight reel. Again, you get what you pay for in a reel. You want a reel with a super smooth drag system, a silent anti-reverse, and a fairly high speed retrieve rate. Your better spinning reels will have a longer, tapered spool for better casting. You don't need something that will hold a half mile of line. A reel that will hold 120 - 150 yards of 10 pound line will be fine. Put the reel on the rod you plan on using. With the reel seat placed between your pinky and next finger, you should feel an almost perfect balance. Remember that you will be holding it all day and that balance will help avoid arm fatigue. My choice of spinning reels are from the Daiwa Whisker Tournament Series. They make different weight reels to be matched with your different weight rods.

LINE - There are more kinds of fishing line on the market than you can shake a stick at. Some good, some not so good. You can choose between monofilament line or a braided line. I prefer braid myself. Braided line has little or no stretch, it won't twist, and it is super sensitive. The majority of my fishing is done with 10 lb test. It's strong, easy to cast, very thin, and goes along with your light weight rod and reel. It's a little bit on the pricey side, but do you really want to be fighting a fish of a lifetime on cheap line? (The correct answer to that was NO!) 10 lb braid will do just fine for snapper, trout, jacks, ladyfish, redfish, and snook. If you are fishing heavy cover like mangroves, docks, or bridges, I would go with 20 lb. Tarpon and sharks require the big stuff, 50 - 80 lb. My choice of line here is Power Pro.

LEADER - As far as I am concerned, there are only two types of leader. Wire and fluorocarbon. Wire is for toothy critters like mackerel, bluefish, and sharks. Fluorocarbon is for everything else. Fluorocarbon disappears in the water and is much more abrasive resistant than mono. I recommend 20 - 30 lb leader with 10 lb line, 30 - 50 lb leader with 20 lb line, and 60 - 80 lb leader with 50 lb line or higher. When fishing for mackerel and bluefish, I would use a very light wire leader. Fishing for large sharks would obviously require something much more substantial.

HOOKS - Hooks need to be one thing and that's SHARP! As far as the debate of circle hooks -vs- standard hooks goes, well, you might just have to experiment to find out for yourself. Some people can use them, others can't. Again you need to match your hook size to the tackle you are using. You can't expect to exert enough force to set an 8/0 hook that's as thick as a pencil with a light 10 lb line. A few hooks of each size from a #2 through a 3/0 will suit most of your needs. I use a 5/0 or 6/0 for tarpon fishing, according to bait size, and a 6/0 - 8/0 circle hook for shark fishing. Throw in some 3/0 worm hooks for fishing soft plastics on the flats and you've pretty much got it covered.

JIGS & BUCKTAILS - There are tons of lead head jigs and bucktails on the market. I have tried them all. I'll save you some shopping time and tell you now that the best ones you can find are made by Capt. Hank Brown's Hookup Lures. The hooks are super sharp and the paint is superior. As far as the jig heads go, the most common one I use is the ¼ oz with a 1/0 black nickel hook in chartreuse. It's great for presenting live shrimp and pinfish as well as soft plastics. There are two types of bucktails that I would recommend, the Inshore Premium Series and the Weedless. I use a ¼ or 3/8 oz weedless bucktail when fishing the grassy flats for trout and redfish and a 3/8 oz Inshore Series when fishing the deeper channels and bays for redfish and snook. Either can be used around the mangrove shoreline depending on the type of bottom. The natural tan colors are great as well as my "go to" pattern of red and white. They have an online store and can be found at your local tackle shops.

PLASTICS - No tackle box is complete without an assortment of plastics. There are soft plastics and hard plastics. When using soft plastics, I prefer Berkeley Gulps, usually in a shrimp pattern. They can be fished on the flats with a worm hook or a light jig head, or in the deeper channels and runoffs with a little heavier jig head. I have caught everything from trout to tarpon on soft plastics. Get some! Hard plastics are lures such as Mirrolure, Rapala, YO-ZURI, etc. A few of these in the 4" - 5" size will do great. As far as color goes, try to match the color of the natural bait fish of the area you will be fishing. Of course, don't forget about the old standby red/white.

If any of this helps you in any way, then I have done what I set out to do by writing this. With that being said... **Ladies, Let's Go Fishing!!!**

By Capt. Kerry Wingo - Tails Up Fishing Charters - 305-394-1383 - www.tailsupfishing.com

**Note: Capt. Kerry has been a helper and advisor for "Ladies, Let's Go Fishing!" for more than ten years!
Thanks, Capt. Kerry!**

© 2013 "Ladies, Let's Go Fishing!"