

Keen Whakatane Fisho Chris Firkin has spent the past 3 years doing a fair amount of work in Australia, over this time he has seen a revelation take place relating to squid fishing, which if taken seriously here could see a whole new fishery discovered all over the country. Chris shares with us some of the techniques, products and trends taking place in Aus right now.



Squid Fishing Tips and Techniques

Article & Pics – Chris Firkin

Squid fishing is not new to NZ, particular areas like Leigh wharf in the upper Hauraki gulf, New Plymouth, islands like Great Barrier, Mokohinaus, White Island and the Tauranga harbour all at certain times of the year see a lot of these tasty alien like creatures from the deep. I'm sure there are many other potential hot spots yet to be discovered, which is what makes this fishery so exciting.

If you haven't tried eating fresh squid - you really have missed out on something special, as squid (calamari) rates up there with scallops & crayfish, it is truly delicious!

Brief history of Japanese EGI (squid lure in Japanese)

A few years back (about 300 seriously) the Japanese while fishing observed squid holding on to small pieces of drift wood. This got one fisherman thinking; he shaved a piece of wood into the shape of a prawn, attached a coin to the belly and placed a number of small hooks to the rear of his creation. This proved deadly on squid and instigated the start of what has now become a massive market all around the globe.

Australia over the past 5 years has seen a huge shift into what has now become a very important and big part of the Australian fishing market. Originally it was the Greeks and Italian immigrants who discovered how prevalent squid were in Australian waters and now every man and his dog seem squid crazy over there.

Us kiwis haven't been fortunate enough to have the easy work of discovering a squid fishery done for us, the biggest issue we face is where they are and at what times of the year are they more prevalent in good numbers. If Australia is anything to go by they should be here all year round with a bigger run of larger squid in spring, when the water temp increases.

I remember in the late 80's a friend David Gardiner & I heard rumours of squid up at Leigh Wharf, we had what would now be described as prehistoric squid jigs available to us at the time, these were plastic lumo squid jigs with no action at all.

We headed on up there with no great expectations and discovered a fun, very productive squid fishery. That night we caught 16, got squid ink all over us including Daves new Toyota celica. (Believe me when I say that this stuff is very difficult to get out of clothing once you have been nailed). The key points we learnt firstly was to fish at the edge of the circle of light (from the light on the wharf). The technique was simple; we would lift the lumo squid jig up and down on the edge of the light, we would see a couple of squid dart past the jig, we would then slow down the movement until we saw the squid approach the jig then stop, the squid would then grab the jig we would then lift slowly and smoothly keeping constant pressure through the rod. Once the squid was directly under us, in one movement we would lift the squid on to the wharf. It was that simple and after trying to figure out how to clean them we ended up with a big feed of squid, which was delicious to say the least.

That technique still in some respects relates to what those in Australia are doing now but the jigs, rods, spray on scents, accessories and technique have been taken to a whole new level, an incredible variety of lures now exist with the Japanese designed jigs being the most popular.

Back 5 years ago the Australian tackle store couldn't sell a jig for much more than \$15, Now they find it difficult to sell a jig under \$20 with \$25 - \$35 dollar jigs being the most commonly sold. I have personally seen (more than once) fisherman grab handfuls of these, spending well in excess of \$300 (crazy?) while in the fishing stores.

Is a more expensive Japanese designed squid jig that much better you ask.

Hell yes, why? Firstly because they swim and dart more efficiently, they don't get snagged anywhere near as often because they are more well balanced and sit on the bottom better. (as pictured) Their colours are also well thought out through years of development. The colour of the EGI (squid lure) has an outer cloth which can be seen from the outside and an under tape which is underneath the cloth which reflects light and can play a huge part in your result. The size of the jig is also very important relating to how fast it sinks and how far it casts, an example a 2.5 size on average will sink at 4 seconds per meter, a 3.0 size will sink at around 3 seconds per meter and so on. Experimenting is the key for us in NZ to discover what colours and combinations work best.

I have been very lucky to be involved with some new product development relating to squid jigs in NZ. Black Magic Tackle have always put a lot of time and effort into

research and development of all their products before releasing them into the market (one of the very few wholesale companies that do in NZ) and what they have come up with are NZ designed squid jigs that work in NZ specifically, not something imported that no one has a clue on. Watch this space as these are not too far away from hitting the market.

Spray on scent has also become an important part of the Aussie squid scene and believe me when I say that these work very well.

Rods are also important, a rod designed for squid is quite different to let's say a soft plastic rod. It has a slower more progressive action, low rider guides to allow better casting performance and a tangle free tip to help prevent tip wraps. They, like fly rods can also be very expensive - well over \$500 is not uncommon.

Japanese PE (polyethylene) braid is the most popular line as it casts smoothly, has a lot more strands than standard cheaper braids (which won't last as long), is round not flat and floats which helps to tip the nose of your jig upwards, allowing a better action for your jig, which in theory will help you catch more squid. I have been using 6kg Black Magic Rainbow braid which is Japanese PE braid and I love it, the meter marks work as bite indicators while fishing during the day and this particular braid is becoming a popular choice Aus. The guru's in Australia now have EGI braid which is very light and super fine in diameter which provides less resistance in the water which gives better presentation to your squid lure.

Last but not least is the retrieve of your jig, the Japanese have developed some very out there techniques which have to be seen to be believed, but there is no hard and fast rule. Basically cast your jig out, allow it to drop to the bottom give 2 - 3 sharp jerks taking your rod to 90 degrees, drop the tip of your rod allowing the jig to drop to the bottom with little or no resistance, then repeat the process. The most important time for you to be aware of, when a squid will attack your jig is when the lure is falling or sitting on the bottom (the pause) the 2 - 3 jerks attracts the squid, the pause is when the squid 9 times out of ten will have a go at the lure, that is why braid is so important as you can feel pretty much immediately when the squid has hit the jig.

There is more to it, but I have covered the basics of what I have learnt, give it a crack, Squid fishing is a lot of fun and taste great.

Good luck, look forward to seeing you out there.

MORE SQUID PICS:

