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# THE Fisherman

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New Jersey,

Delaware Bay Edition

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## Tuna Special

- Inshore Tactics
- Live Peanuts
- On The Chunk
- NJ Giants

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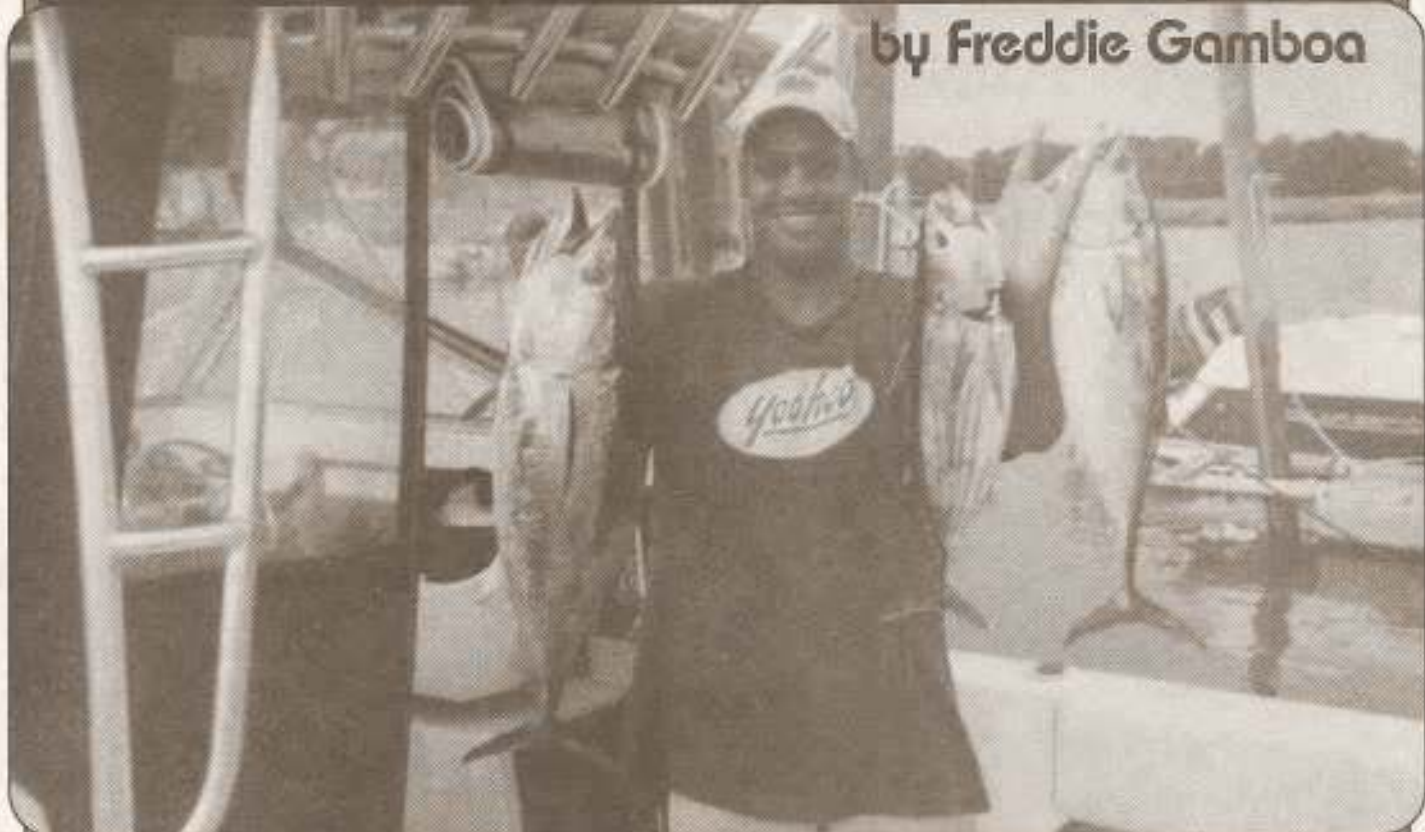
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# LIVE BAIT CHUMMING

by Freddie Gamboa



*Next time you're on the hunt for tuna, pack the livewell with a couple hundred peanut bunker, and prepare yourself for primetime offshore action.*

## TUNA ON PEANUTS

It's late summer, and the nearshore fishing action is becoming predictable, and you're not sure how many more stripers you want to battle on 300 feet of wire. Checking the weather forecasts and the latest SST chart, you decide to see for yourself what this school bluefin bite - great for the last couple years - is all about.

You head for the Resor Wreck or the Mud Hole, where until a few weeks ago, all the action was on the troll, and start chumming. After an hour, the shearwaters are working in your slick, little tunny are rocketing through, and down a bit deeper, you spot the telltale red checkmarks left by school bluefin. Sound like one of those perfectly choreographed Florida fishing shows?

Thanks to the huge masses of juvenile menhaden that have infiltrated our waters in recent seasons, you might get in on this sort of action by taking a cue from the Southern guys, and cashing in on live chum.

Admittedly, last year was my first season using this combination, but it yielded some positive results. And I'm

### TUNA WRECKS

Lillian	26697.0	43419.4	N 40 00.905	W 73 29.899
R.P. Resor	26638.3	43277.1	N 39 46.731	W 73 25.279
Oil	26842.3	43547.7	N 40 12.658	W 73 45.891
Arundo	26792.4	43515.1	N 40 09.847	W 73 40.150

not the only one. Last August, a few sharp charter guys cornered the action around the Mud Hole with this method. This article will discuss this combination of techniques, planning for a safe trip, and rigging up for this type of fishing.

### PLANNING THE TRIP

Before embarking on any inshore tuna trip, my first task is to monitor the NOAA forecast. The boat I run is a 23-foot Seahawk, so my rule of thumb for venturing out is winds in any direction and less than 15 mph is safe, unless it's from the east. The next thing to do is obtain the latest



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### Score tuna on peanuts at the Elephant's Trunk. How appropriate!

ocean temps from any offshore service. I've been using the Rutgers' University Website at [www.thecoolroom.org](http://www.thecoolroom.org).

The last and most important task is to obtain plenty of live bait. On my boat I have a 50-gallon circular live pen, which can accommodate 300 to 400 live peanut bunker. Fortunately, I am able to cast net these baits in the river where I keep my boat. A trick that I have recommended to friends for finding their own live bait is to look in creeks or rivers with good tidal flow where they may have spotted adult bunker in the spring. Once you have located such a spot, look for dimpling on the water's surface or bait flipping.

### RIGGING UP

This type of inshore fishing tends to be a light tackle affair, since most of the fish you're attracting are school bluefin, little tunny, skipjack, and bonito. My tackle consists of Shimano TLD 20s rigged with 30-pound Diamond Momo, matched to the Shimano Tallus Series TLC 58HSB rod. I prefer this combo because of its light weight for chunking and flipping baits all day, yet it has the power to take on any larger bluefin that may show up in your slick. On the lighter side, I like the Shimano Calcutta 400 rigged with 14-power G Power from Gamakatsu matched to a Shimano Tallus Series TLC 70ML rod.

On the terminal end, I use a Spro 50-pound power swivel to my main line, tied to a 4-foot section of 20-pound Seaguar Fluorocarbon leader, snelled to #1 live bait heavy duty Gamakatsu hook. I like to hook my baits right through their nostrils, as the cartilage is tough and allows you to cast these baits without tearing off. Hooking bait this way will also let your bait swim more naturally.

### THE FLORIDA FLAIR

With forecasts and baits secured, it's time to begin focusing on where to fish. When hunting for tuna, I focus on prominent structures like the Glory Hole and Monster Ledge, or wrecks such as the Lillian, R.P. Resort, Oil, and

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Arundo. When you get to your spot, look for rips or weedlines, temperature breaks, water clarity of at least 30 feet of visibility, and especially signs of life. Bait, birds, and turtles all provide a good indication that something is there. Personally, if I don't see a combination of at least two of these previous factors, I'll move along to the next spot.

Once I've found my tuna hotspot, I drift updrift or upwind of the structure, pitching live baits five to 10 at a time every couple of minutes. After 15 minutes of pitching baits with a proper drift over my intended structure, if I don't have any tuna busting on my baits, I will move to another location. Luckily for me, I've yet to move onto another spot at any time that I've employed this technique.

At this point, I instruct my crew to drop anchor and begin chumming Northeast style, with one notable exception. Instead of using traditional butterfish, I will use the peanut bunker. The first peanuts I get, I will pop one eye out and throw them out. I'll then take some more baby bunker and cut them in half. I believe these Florida tactics have some benefits, as the live baits thrown out into the open ocean tend to school up near the nearest structure, which naturally is your boat. This seems to keep predators close, and those baits that are blinded in one eye tend to swim in circles, driving tuna ballistic! Lastly, those peanuts that were cut in half tend to give off a lot of scales and scent, which really spices up the slick.

This type of fishing is very exciting and has become one of my favorite ways to catch fish. Last year, I had numerous species attracted to my slick, besides the intended tuna, including species of shark and a few dolphin. On my best trip last year, we limited out with school bluefin at the Monster Ledge within minutes of setting the anchor. With the right conditions and plenty of live bait, I hope to continue this new tuna tradition this summer.



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