

# Sheepshead

*Archosargus probatocephalus*

**Food Quality:** 4/5

**Where:**

- Offshore around structure and artificial reefs
- Nearshore around structure such as rocks, marker posts, debris from Nov - Feb
- Onshore around piers, docks, posts, sunken structure, seawalls, and bridges in the cooler months

**When:**

- As soon as the water begins to cool, usually from November to late February, you'll see loads of sheepshead migrate inshore
- When the tide begins to move, they will feed more consistently

**Gear:**

- Light spinning or bait casting tackle preferred
- Medium to stout 6 to 7-foot rod
- 12-20 lb braided line
- 15-20 lb fluorocarbon leader
- # 1.0 circle hook (go small on the hook - many anglers love the #1 Octopus hook by Gamakatsu)
- Enough weight to keep the bait near the structure
- Carolina rig with 6-7-inch leader

**Bait:**

- Fiddler or other small crabs
- Barnacles
- Pieces of oysters and clams
- Live or dead shrimp threaded on hook
- Sand fleas

**Tactics:**

- Keep line tight
- Pay attention to small taps. They suck the bait in and spit out the hook quickly
- Use the bottom half of the shrimp
- Position bait close to the structure
- Check rig often with small movements. You will often have one on and not be aware
- Avoid large bait. They have small mouths

- Scrape away barnacles with flat hoe to chum and drop line into the mix
- Use slow moving jigs tipped with bait
- Avoid soft tipped rods as bite is very difficult to feel
- Keep rod tip up and make sure drag is not too loose. They can wrap around structure very quickly

**Trends:**

- They prefer crabs and barnacles at the beginning of the season
- They will take shrimp mid to late season
- They will move into local docks as the water cools and stay there until it begins to warm up after February.

**Community:**

- Check with local marina personnel who can tell you where anglers are finding them
- Watch for boats lined up at docks or pilings during the season
- Talk to other anglers. Sheepshead spots are not kept so secret as spots for other species.



<b>Sheepshead Catch Card</b>		
<b>Tactics</b>	<b>Trends</b>	<b>Tips</b>
Structure: docks, piers, marker posts, rocks, artificial reefs	Preferring small crabs, barnacles and oysters over shrimp	Carolina Rig with short leader. Keep line tight to feel small taps. Bait close to structure
Bait: oysters, barnacles, clams, shrimp, sand fleas	Larger ones are staying in colder, deeper water	Smaller hooks, smaller bait pieces due to small mouths

