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

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• 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.

Sheepshead Catch Card

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