

Rock Cod and Lingcod Fishing Tips

By Andrew Yeh - July 4, 2015



When the salmon season is slow, nothing beats a wide open rock cod and ling cod trip! Targeting these species often results in fast-paced fishing that can yield limits within hours. The best part is that you're able to experiment with hundreds of different lures and techniques since rock cod and ling cod aren't too picky with what they eat. Get ready for some rock cod and ling cod fishing tips that will help put limits in the boat in no time!

ROCK COD REGULATIONS

RULES TO KEEP IN MIND

(Always check **CURRENT** regulations as these may be outdated in the future)

1. The season for boaters is from **May 15th through October 31st**
2. Species can only be taken in waters **less than 120ft deep**
3. Daily bag & possession limit is **10 fish in combination of all species within RCG Complex**
 1. Includes all species of Rockfish, Cabezon & Greenlings per person
 2. **5 Black Rockfish** per person (within limit of 10)
 3. **3 Bocaccio Rockfish** per person (within limit of 10)
 4. Yelloweye, Canary, Bronzespotted & Cowcod rockfish **may not be kept**

LINGCOD REGULATIONS



1. Season for boaters is open **May 15th through October 31st**
2. Ling Cod can only be kept in waters **less than 120ft deep**
3. Daily bag & possession limit is **3 fish**
4. Minimum size limit of **22 inches total length**

LOCATING ROCK COD AND LINGCOD

The most important thing is to have a decent fishfinder that allows you to mark locations holding structure and schools of fish. Here are other important aspects to remember.

- **Rock Cod and Ling Cod strictly hold to *structure***
 - Find rock structure in the form of ledges, humps, or even shipwrecks
 - Kelp beds are also key fish-holding structure
- **Depth is Important**
 - If you aren't finding fish at a certain depth, try going deeper or shallower until you get bites. Most of the time going deeper helps but not always.
 - Rock cod and lingcod can be located anywhere from 60 feet or less to over 130 feet of water. Once again play around with depth until you get results.
 - Different species hold to different depths and types of structure.
- **Fish Quickly & Efficiently**
 - Schools of rockfish tend to relocate after a few minutes
 - When you find a school get your rigs down as quickly as possible.
 - Keep extra pre-tied rigs handy so you can quickly switch and keep fishing if needed.
 - Don't get stuck to one spot for too long. Always move around looking for new structure and mark them on your graph for future use.

ROCK COD AND LINGCOD GEAR

We do *not* recommend spinning gear for these fish unless the rod is specifically for jigging such as the Shimano Trevala, etc. It's possible but the 6-10oz. jigs make it very difficult to manage on spinning gear. We highly recommend using a conventional reel since you get more torque and less strain on your body.

CONVENTIONAL REEL SUGGESTIONS

Here are a few of our favorite rockfishing reels based on personal experience.

- **Shimano Tekota 500** – A workhorse for the price. Suitable for both fresh and saltwater and offers a line counter feature if needed.

- **Penn Squall Levelwind** – A quality reel for the low price. The Squall feels incredibly solid and functions accordingly.
- **Daiwa Saltist 30H** – Daiwa's pride and joy for a mid-range saltwater reel. Feels extremely smooth compared to it's peers.

LINE CHOICE FOR ROCKFISH

If you prefer monofilament, use 20-25lb test. If you have the funds, however, **use braided line**. It allows you to drop jigs down faster, set hook harder and most importantly enhance your feel when down deep. Some charter boats will not allow you to use braid so make sure you double check with the captain before spooling. If you're on a private vessel I highly recommend braid with a mono leader.

MONOFILAMENT LINE SUGGESTIONS

- **Clear Trilene Big Game** – Cheap and doesn't have much memory. Lasts many trips and maintains strength.
- **Maxima Ultragreen** – In our opinion the strongest mono out there. Only downside is a bit of memory but it makes up for it with super abrasive resistance.
- **Yo-Zuri Hybrid** – Monofilament line with a fluorocarbon coating. Super strong and the coating gives it abrasive resistance as well.

BRAIDED LINE SUGGESTIONS

- **Green PowerPro Spectra** – A staple for most anglers. This braid feels more coarse but is extremely durable.
- **Daiwa J-Braid** – A newer braid from Daiwa that is extremely slick, saving your guides from damage. Our favorite feature is that the colors don't fade, letting you use bright colors with no worries.

JIGGING AND DRIFT RODS

This can be any variety of lengths and weight capacities, but here is what I've used personally.

- **Daiwa V.I.P 7' (VIP870)** – I *highly* recommend this to any beginner or even veteran. I have a commercial fishing buddy that prefers these over his expensive Calstar rods and that says a lot. The price is just a bonus and the action is perfect for any jigging/drift presentation.
- **Phenix Abyss 808/809** – The rod to last you a lifetime. Many anglers are turning to 8' rods because they cast easier and have better rod tip action. The 808 or 809 is absolutely perfect for jigging iron or drifting bait, not to mention it has a lifetime warranty.

ROCK COD RIGS AND JIGS

Rock cod can be caught on almost anything, but here are a few standard jigs and rigs that will catch limits in no time.



- **P-Line Farallon Feathers** – One of the cheapest, most popular methods. For a little under \$3 these pre-tied rigs are perfect! All they need is a **6-8oz torpedo weight** to go on the end.
 - My favorite colors are Red/Yellow, White, and Green/Yellow
- **Buzz Bomb** – One of my favorite ways to jig for rockfish. Often times ling cod will hit these too! You'll need a few other items to complete the Buzz Bomb rig.
 - **Plastic Beads** – Any size is fine.
 - **Rubber Punch Stop** – This goes above your Buzz Bomb to keep it from sliding up the main line.

Customizing rockfish jigs are another great way to improve your chances while out on the water. Depending on the location and time of year it can make all the difference.

LINGCOD LURES AND DRIFT RIGS

If you're drifting, a standard 3-Way Rig is great. Swim-baits and jigs provide a little extra fun.

- **Three Way Rig** – If you want them pre-tied, look for Halibut Drift Rigs. They are essentially the same thing.
 - Use anchovy, mackerel, sardines, or whole squid as bait.
 - Live bait is best! Use a **Sabiki Rig** to jig up live bait and send them down for instant results.
- **Lead Head & Swim-bait Combo** – This can be any combination, but here's what I use.
 - **6-8oz. Lead Head** – I use the simple, unpainted heads.
 - **5-7" Big Hammer Swim-bait** – These have been the most durable baits I've used.
 - My favorite colors are Halloween, Pacific 'Chovy, and Pearl.
 - Any big Scampi/Curly Tail plastic in Motor Oil, White or Orange colors.
- **P-Line Diamond Jig** – A smaller, more enticing profile compared to the Hex
- **P-Line Hex Jig** – Perfect for both shallow & deep water situations.

FISHING TECHNIQUES FOR ROCK COD AND LING COD

VOMIT EQUALS LINGCOD? WHAT?!

More often than not, a lingcod will regurgitate a dead octopus after being caught. Yes, this is disgusting but that stinky creature has now become your absolute best chance of landing another ling. Send the octopus down on a three-way drift rig and hang on!

JIGGING FOR ROCKFISH

1. Cast out as far as you can and let the lure/rig touch bottom. Keep an eye on the fishfinder and remember the depth you're fishing.
2. After hitting bottom **reel up 3-5 cranks immediately**. If you wait too long you will snag rocks and risk breaking off.
3. Lift your rod fast and drop slow. Crank up a few times and repeat until your jig is back up to you.
4. For a little more scent and attraction you can **tip each hook with a thin strip of squid**. Rockfish absolutely love this.

DRAGGING SWIM-BAITS FOR LINGCOD

1. Cast out as far as you can and touch bottom briefly.
2. After hitting bottom **crank up 3-5 times immediately**.
3. Slowly jig your swim-bait up and down while reeling up slack until it's back to you. It's okay to contact rocks as you're less likely to snag with the top hook feature. **The high sensitivity of braid helps you feel your bait better.**

DRIFTING THREE-WAY RIGS FOR LINGCOD

1. Drop straight down from the boat until you hit bottom.
2. After hitting bottom **crank up 3-5 times immediately**.
3. Place rod in holder and wait for your rod to load up.
4. Keep an eye on depth as it may change drastically. Adjust depth accordingly.