



65. CARP / KARPEN (Cyprinus carpio)

IDENTIFICATION: The carp has a chunky body, a turned-down snout, and two pairs of small barbels (whiskers) on the upper mouth. The color varies considerably. The back is often blue-green to dark green or brownish green fading into yellow on the undersides. The fins, except the dorsal fin, are blue-green with a pinkish tinge. The three major variations of carp are the scaleless or leather carp, the partially scaled or mirror carp, and the scaled carp. Carp type fish have in common: head without scales, numerous toothed jaw, toothed chewing plate. Carp uses the mouth in a sucking action. Carp's intestine is at least twice as long as its body.

HABITAT: Although the carp is known to survive under a wide range of condition, it prefers warm, streams, lakes, and shallows with abundant organic matter and aquatic plants. Carp bury in the mud and hibernate during winter. Few fish can withstand drastic changes in water temperatures as well as the carp.

FOOD:

Diet: Carp root along the bottom while feeding on small aquatic animals, muddying waters for more sensitive game fish and often disrupting the spawning areas of other fish. They are omnivorous eaters, feeding on insect larvae and plankton. Fishermen make the best catches with doughballs, worms, cheese and grain. Carp feed leisurely, and the novice carp fisherman must learn when to set the hook, because carp like to nibble and play with the bait before taking it.

Value: The carp is regarded highly in most European countries because of its food value, high reproduction rate, and speedy growth. The meat is delicious and has a high protein content. European fishermen are fond of carp fishing because, in addition to its meat value, the carp puts up a strong, although unspectacular fight.

SPAWNING: Carp spawn from May to July. The females often lay 80.000 eggs per pound of body weight in shallow, weedy waters. The sticky eggs attach themselves to water plants, but only a small number develop into young fish.