

How To Brine Ballyhoo

By Captain John Mallete

The rising interest in offshore SportFishing and the ongoing fall in bait numbers has made the price of ballyhoo almost unbearable. Making your bait last the whole day and even the next few days can save alot of money and time. The best way to go about saving your hard earned money is to brine your baits. Brining your baits preserves their color, texture, and even toughens them up a bit. Brining your baits also saves your energy, so you don't have to spend your entire day changing washed out baits. I've tried alot of different ways of brining my baits, but there is one way that sticks out as my favorite.

Captain John's "Brining Recipe".

Ingredients:

1. One 48 quart cooler (with drain)
2. Water (salt or fresh)
3. Two small bags of ice
4. Two cartons of Kosher salt (iodized salt will turn baits brown)
5. One tiny cap full of Clorox bleach (optional)
6. Ballyhoo
7. Metal Cookie Sheet

When brining ballyhoo I like to go ahead and break off their beaks, punch out their eyeballs, and squeeze out their feces before hand. Obviously, you want to do this the day before fishing.

(This also works for Cigar Minnows, Squid or Sardines.)

First, pour the ice into your cooler. Add enough water to just cover the ice. Then, stir the ice water until it is mixed well. Pour in one of the cartons of salt. Stir the salt together with the ice water. Let it sit for 2-3 minutes. After the mixture has settled, put your hand in the water. If you can only keep your hand in the water for a few seconds, then it's just right. Add your bait (already thawed) into the mixture. Slowly stir your bait into the mixture and let sit for about 15 minutes with the cooler lid closed. After about 15 minutes add in your other carton of salt and the cap full of Clorox (preserves bait color). Stir it in with the bait mixture. Let everything sit for about 12 hours. When done your baits will be pretty stiff. Just bend them back and forth until flexible again. These baits will last you your entire fishing day. Take your freshly brined baits out of the mixture and place them on top of a metal cookie sheet that is sitting on top of the ice/salt mixture. Now it is time to go fishing

You can even make the baits last up to 4 days. Just drain the excess water out of cooler by leaving the cooler drain open overnight. All you have to do is take your baits out each morning before leaving the dock,

replenish ice, pour more salt on top of the ice, and place the baits on the cookie sheet and you're ready to go.

Hopefully, you catch so many fish that you have to get more bait each day. But when you don't catch that many or the bite offshore is slow, this is a great way to preserve your bait. You will also save time and money not having to constantly change your washed out baits while fishing, or throwing away the old thawed bait at the end of your day. I hope this helps everyone save some money on a day where you've already given an arm and leg to fill up with gas, tackle, and beer just to go fishing.

Tight Lines

Capt. John Mallette

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