

Get your sea legs and your taste buds ready
Written by Mike Baxter | Let's Go Fishin'
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It's almost time for rockfish.

May 1 marks the start for central coast rockfish. The opener is from Pigeon Point to Point Lopez. Shore-based anglers and spear fishermen had been allowed to keep rockfish, and the season will open to boaters May 1. This is the official start of the summer-ocean fishing season, and as boaters get out, they will also try for other species like halibut.

There have been a few small amendments from last year's regulations covering rockfish.

Image

quite a catch: Danny Cortazzo displays a lingcod he caught outside Natural Bridges aboard his boat, Hang Ten. He used live sardines for bait.

Fishing must be in 240 feet of water or less. Using a rig with no more than two hooks is the gear restriction. The limit for rockfish is 10, along with two lingcod. The retention of canary rockfish, golden eye and cow cod rockfish is illegal. The lingcod size limit is 24 inches. The 10-fish limit only allows 2 baccoccio rockfish, with a minimum size limit of 15 inches. Two sea trout (kelp greenling) can also be a part of the 10-fish limit and they must be more than 12 inches, along with two cabezon that a minimum size limit of 15 inches.

For exact regulations and fish identification charts, go to the California Fish and Game Web site at www.dfg.ca.gov/. Reviewing the regulations and proper fish identification is a must if you head out for rockfish.

Ken Stagnaro aboard the "Velocity" reported, "We have been catching nice bags of sand dabs, and we are very excited about the rockfish opener." Stagnaro added, "The conditions look great with cool water, and lots of market squid in the area." The Stagnaros will be running cod trips from May 1 through the end of the season, Nov. 15.

Mark Dingler from Anglers Choice reported, "I am so excited I booked a trip on a charter boat to get out on the first day of the season!" Mark also added that his store is stocked with a nice array of rockfish and a lingcod arsenal. "I have already had reports of halibut caught and a few incidental rockfish caught and released from boat fishermen in the Capitola kelp beds." The best gear to use for rockfish is the shrimp fly rigs with small sharp hooks; I like the Black Belt brand with white feathers. Small jigs like diamond bars or Mega Bait lures are popular, and rubber swim baits work well also. A slender slice of fresh squid adds to any lure of choice for rock fish. Rockfish are fun to catch and taste in a taco. I hope you get out for fresh fish and fun.

Mike Baxter has fished in the Monterey Bay Area since he was a boy and has been a licensed charter boat captain for more than 15 years. Contact him at captmikebaxter@yahoo.com. He also hosts a fishing show on radio station KSCO (1080) from 7:06 to 8 p.m. Thursdays April through September.