

POPPING CORK: Pre-rigged packs available

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the concave surface pops the water, simulating a fish strike prey on the surface. Other corks take a more traditional round or oblong shape, but slide up and down a wire stem to create the same type of commotion. Cast to a likely spot and let it sit a few moments. Occasionally, jerk the rod to make the cork pop the surface. When the cork goes down, set the hook.

"All of my popping corks have cup-shaped tops," Abruscato recommended. "That top makes a sound more like a trout striking, almost like a topwater popper. A popping cork rig imitates fish striking bait. That brings them in closer. Then, they spot the bait or smell it if it's natural or has some scent."

Anglers can attach a separate float directly to the line about 18 to 36 inches above a

hook. Some anglers tie a swivel to the line to keep the cork from sliding too far and attach a length of fluorocarbon leader to the swivel. For added casting heft, some anglers add weight to the rig. Some companies sell pre-rigged packages that come equipped with a cork, leader, weight, rattles and plastic or metal beads that create additional noise and vibration.

"I make my own rigs," Abruscato detailed. "I buy three-inch corks with cupped tops and use titanium wire for the stem because it doesn't become misshapen like some other wires. I'll slide a couple brass beads on the wire above the cork. I add extra weight to my popping cork rigs. By putting that extra weight on the rig, I can throw it much farther. Generally, the person who throws a bait the farthest catches the most fish."

With popping corks, anglers

can fish many types of live or cut bait including minnows, small mullets, croakers, menhaden, fish chunks or crabs. However, most people use live or fresh shrimp. Hook a shrimp under the horn. Carefully avoid hitting the black spot in its head, which could kill it.

Various artificial temptations like plastic shrimp, jigs and flies can also work well with popping corks. When spooked, a live shrimp naturally flicks its tail to escape and frequently rises to the surface. When an angler pops a cork, a plastic shrimp flies up toward the surface and then slowly sinks again, just like a live shrimp. Fish hear the commotion and think one of their cousins took a shot at a shrimp and missed. Then, they see the morsel sinking and run in to grab the morsel before another fish eats it.



When jerked in the water, a popping cork makes a splash that attracts fish to a bait suspended beneath it.

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