

Fast and delicious!

Great-tasting pompano provide incredible action along beach

BY JOHN N. FELSHER

Most people catch pompano by accident while fishing for redfish, speckled trout, flounder, sheepshead and other species, but nobody tosses the delicious little scrappers back if they can catch them.

"Pompano are schooling fish, favoring beaches with a good surf and high salinity," explained Dr. Bob Shipp, (bobshipp.com) a marine biologist from Mobile and author of Dr. Bob Shipp's Guide to Fishes of the Gulf of Mexico. "This is probably because their favorite food items are small, shelled animals living in the upper layers of sandy bottoms. Powerful jaw muscles crush the shells."

Small relatives of hard-fighting jack crevalle, pompano provide incredible action on light tackle. They love to roam sandy beaches. Frequently, they hunt their favorite prey species in the crashing surf right at the water edge, making them great targets for wade fisherman.

"People don't need a \$50,000 boat to catch pompano," quipped Ralph Young of Fishing Dixie charter service (251-923-7492, ralpho@gulftel.com) in Orange Beach. "People without boats can catch them right off the beach and have a blast. Beach fishermen catch them just as well, if not better,

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Photo by John N. Felsher

Chandra Wright shows off a pompano she caught in the Gulf of Mexico off Orange Beach.

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