

# REDFISH: Soft-plastic finesse baits can work wonders

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bile-Tensaw Delta. With reduced flow coming out of the freshwater rivers during the fall, upper Mobile Bay and the lower delta usually turn saltier.

“Many of those shallow bays north of the Mobile Causeway grow thick with grass,” Abruscato advised. “The grassy flats on the south side of the interstate also provide good fishing in the fall. A lot of shrimp push through there. Those reds are eating shrimp and crabs on the edges of that grass.”

Soft-plastic finesse baits can produce explosive action when flicked across matted grass tops. Rig the baits with the hook points inserted into the plastic so they can skitter easily over the mats. If possible, use no weight or only the lightest weight necessary to aid in casting. Pull these lifelike finesse baits over the grass, pausing periodically. When passing an opening, let baits sink a foot or two. Redfish often slurp such baits as the sink.

For a more dynamic presentation, rig frogs the same way to make them weedless. Run frogs with a steady buzzing retrieve or with the hop and stop

method like fishing a more traditional topwater bait.

A legendary redfish favorite, gold spoons can also go through weedy areas. Run them just below the surface or make a slow wobbling retrieve just off the bottom. Periodically pause the retrieve so the spoon sinks a little. Reds commonly snatch spoons as they flutter down.

“A gold spoon is magic for redfish, particularly when fishing thicker, matted grass,” Abruscato said. “People can throw it anywhere and cover a lot of water. I think a spoon imitates a crab and that’s why redfish like them.”

Spinnerbaits and buzzbaits also make excellent redfish temptations. Neither bait can run through solid mats the way a frog can, but they can go through patchy weeds. Redfish sometimes explode on buzzbaits as they would topwaters. Anglers can run versatile spinnerbaits at any depth.

“I love spinnerbaits for redfish,” Abruscato stated. “I use a harness spinner with a Gulp! Ripple Mullet or Ripple Shad trailer on it. The blade gives off flash and vibrations and the Gulp! gives off scent. That appeals to multiple senses on a fish.”

The marshes and bays near Bayou La Batre and the islands in Mississippi Sound always hold redfish. Instead of grass, look for shell reefs and small channels draining the marshes.

During a falling tide, redfish frequently wait at the mouths of marshy drains and other tributaries. Dropping water levels flush prey from their hiding places into open water.

Redfish stack up at the mouths of these drains waiting to ambush anything tempting flowing toward them. Throw a plastic shrimp or crab imitation upstream and let the tides carry it down naturally.



**Bobby Abruscato** shows off a redfish.

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