

Greater Amberjack

Seriola dumerili



OTHER NAMES:

Amberfish
AJ
Coronado
Cavilla

RANGE: Entire Gulf.

HABITAT: Adults are common at various depths, ranging from reefs several hundred feet deep to fairly shallow wrecks and reefs. Big ones also come close to shore at times, particularly in the Florida Keys. Artificial reefs and wrecks all along the Gulf Coast often harbor huge schools of small Amberjack, and many Gulf wrecks are home to big ones as well.

DESCRIPTION: The heavy body is brownish or gold-hued overall. A dark, oblique line through the eye ends at the first ray of the dorsal fin.

SIZE: Schools of young fish are common at 5-20 pounds. Average size over deep wrecks and reefs is 30-60 pounds, but 100-pounders are not too rare and the potential maximum exceeds 150 pounds. World record 155 pounds, 10 ounces.

FOOD VALUE: Excellent, smoked or fresh.

GAME QUALITIES: A strong, punishing fighter that powers deep and defies lifting. Fairly long runs can also occur early in the fight. A great deal of stamina matches their strength. Novices may fight Amberjack of average size for an hour or longer, even on fairly heavy tackle.

TACKLE AND BAITS: Amberjack are most often caught aboard charterboats and partyboats on heavy rods and reels with lines testing 50 pounds or more—and are no patsies, even then. Experienced light-tackle anglers can successfully battle them with spinning and baitcasting rigs, and even fly rods. Around wrecks, they frequently follow hooked fish to boatside, and also may rise to the top voluntarily. Then they can be cast to with surface plugs, spoons, jigs, or big flyrod streamers and poppers. Live chum will also draw Amberjack from the depths. Best bait with heavy tackle is any sort of live fish, the friskier the better. AJs will also take whole dead baits, trolling lures, and even cutbaits—much to the distress, sometimes, of Snapper and Grouper fishermen.

FISHING SYSTEMS: Drifting; Trolling; Casting.