Bream are one of Arkansas’ most popular game fish. They are members of the sunfish family, but many Arkansas anglers often refer to them as “perch.” Rounded, deep-bodied fish, mature bream are roughly the size of an adult hand.

Bream is a catch-all term for various species of sunfish. The most common bream caught by Arkansas anglers are bluegill sunfish, green sunfish, warmouth and redear sunfish.

Sunfish are found near aquatic vegetation and sunken trees in shallow bays, lakes and ponds. Some species may be found in streams, but they often prefer slack water outside of the main current.
Bait and Tackle

Crickets and small worms are excellent choices when using live bait, and productive artificial lures include small jigs, spinners and poppers. Live bait should be placed on a small No. 8 hook. A long jig pole works best for slowly lowering artificial or live baits around brush tops, logs, stumps and vegetation. A regular rod and reel combination also can be used to cast live bait or artificial bait to likely bream cover. When using a regular rod and reel, a slow, stop-and-go retrieve should be used to allow the bait to slowly fall and stay in one place.

Cleaning Techniques

1. Use a spoon to remove the scales. Hold the fish by the tail and scale from tail to head.
2. Remove the fish’s head by cutting across the back and behind the pectoral fins on each side of the fish.
3. Use a knife to cut off the bottom front fins and make a slit to remove internal organs.
4. Rinse the fish with fresh water and place on ice.

Bream Recipes

Bream with Cheese

1 cup of grated cheese
12 bluegill
1 teaspoon of dry mustard
1 cup of milk
1 onion, sliced
1 teaspoon of salt
2 tomatoes, sliced
½ teaspoon of white pepper
1 teaspoon of worcestershire sauce

Spread the onion over the base of the baking dish. Cover with half of the tomatoes and half of the grated cheese. Place the fish on top and cover with the remaining tomato. Add worcestershire sauce, mustard, salt and pepper to the milk and pour over the fish mixture. Place in the oven at 400° F for twenty minutes. Remove from the oven and sprinkle with remaining cheese. Return to the oven and cook for five minutes more or until the cheese melts.

Fried Bream

12 bluegill
3 cups of yellow cornmeal
1 cup of flour
3 eggs
salt and pepper to taste
peanut oil

Clean and scale the bluegill, remove the organs, and clean with cold water. Mix corn meal, flour and seasoning. Dip fish in eggs, then dredge the fish in the dry mixture. Deep fry in the hot peanut oil, using either a cast iron skillet or fish fryer.