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Success reeks of garlic

Angler finds bass go for his smelly backyard concoction

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CAMERON - Fishermen have long turned to fish attractants to get more bites, and Randy Jones is no different. But when the status quo wasn't pungent enough, he took matters into his own hands.

Now, he hopes to get stinking rich off his sauce.

In the morning, when Jones first goes into the "lab," one of two shed-like structures in his back yard, he flips on an industrial fan aimed out the propped door.

The smell of garlic is so thick -- having built up overnight -- that he usually heads back into his house and has a cup of coffee before returning.

"It'll just about knock you down," he said.

Jones, 46, is the man behind CB's Hawg Sauce, that neon-colored fish attractant that has made it onto the shelves of bait shops across the Southeast and beyond.

It has long been contended by anglers that fish attractants give anglers an edge -- they appeal to a fish's sense of smell, cover up human odors and can trick the fish into holding on longer.

But for Jones, a bass angler at heart, the fish attractants on the market weren't strong enough. They wore off too quickly, he said.

Though he did not invent the concept of a garlic-scented bass attractant, he went out into his shed and started tinkering in 2000.

"I spent many, many hours in this lab -- figuring out what they want," he said.

What he came up with is three times stronger than other scents on the market, he said.

"Smell mine, and then go smell theirs," he said. "You can just tell."

Jones lives on a quiet country road south of Sanford, and he has few neighbors, none of whom ever has complained about the smell, he said.

"That's why we live out in the woods," he said.

His wife, Rene, is supportive.

"It keeps him busy," she said. "It smells fine. It's not in the house. It's where it's supposed to be."

Even for garlic lovers, the smell inside the Jones' lab is probably too heavy. But under the water, bass love the clove, he said.

"The garlic's got that taste," he said. "Fish love garlic."

When he got things just right, he didn't tell anyone, electing to take his advantage with him into the field of the local bass tournament circuit.

"He started winning tournaments like crazy," said Sanford's Mike Leslie, the president of the River Rats Tournament, a john-boat circuit that Jones fished. "There's always that question when a guy is fairly decent but then starts winning a lot. They just knew he was doing something that nobody else was doing. And everybody wanted to know just exactly what it was."

Leslie since has become friends with Jones.

"I got to talking with him," Leslie said. "I went fishing with him and tried to get some stuff off him. I caught a fish on my very first cast."

Jones' friends urged him to start selling the liquid. He put it on the market in 2003.



Angler and entrepreneur Randy Jones of Cameron fills a container with CB's Hawg Sauce, which is shipped to bait shops around the Southeast.
Staff Photos by Chuck Liddy

The name is a play on largemouth bass, which long have been referred to as "hawgs" by bass anglers. "CB's" is a reference to his nickname, Crossbow.

It sells in 4-ounce bottles and tubes for about \$6. Last year, he sold about 800 gallons, all made in the shed in his backyard. (A list of area dealers can be found on the Web site www.cbshawgsauce.com.)

Roy Reter, a Raleigh tournament angler, found Hawg Sauce while surfing the Internet.

"I was looking for something that was a little bit stronger smelling," said Reter, now sponsored by Jones.

Jones also owns Crossbow's, a store in Olivia that sells computers, citizens band radios, faxes, copies "and, of course, Hawg Sauce," Jones said.

About six months ago, sales reached the point where Jones had to expand -- his old shed just wasn't big enough. The new shed sits next to the old one and is 12 by 21 feet.

And Jones has expanded his product line, too. Though the original product was sold in spray bottles, Hawg Sauce now is sold in gel form. Jones expanded the flavors to include "Crawfish" and "Bass Honey." All of the flavors are subtitled "Sweet and Sassy."

In the lab, there are several Rube Goldberg-style devices.

Three large vats are used for mixing the main components, water or oil with a sweetener. One is a 55-gallon drum, and the others are containers of 95 and 250 gallons.

Pumps move the liquid into PVC pipes and smaller mixing stations where the scent is added.

Metal commercial framing constructed just so holds motors above 5-gallon buckets. Metal rods with propellers extend from the motors and rotate, mixing in the ingredients.

Around the shop are Mason jars full of flavored oil from his secret source.

Come summertime, he'll limit Hawg Sauce labor to the evenings because there's no air conditioning in the lab.

"If I got to whip a batch up in the morning, I'm out of there by noon time," he said.

Sometimes, the smell is even too strong for him.

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