

Spira International Boat Building Articles

Home Building a Fishing Boat

By Jeff Spira

One of the most popular uses for boats is for fishing. People sometimes look at the bewildering array of available boat types and are confused about what type is most useful for them. Hopefully this article will make you aware of the various types of fishing boats there are so you can do a good job going about picking the best design for you to build in your home workshop.

The first thing you have to decide is what type of water you'll be fishing on. A suitable boat for small ponds and backwaters would not necessarily be the best choice for near coastal conditions where bigger seas might sneak up on you. Similarly a river fishing boat capable of handling wild whitewater might be a disappointing performer on larger, open lakes. A boat that will have to do double duty as a fishing and waterfowl hunting boat will be very different from a boat that will be doing double duty as a fishing and water skiing boat. Spend some time identifying the uses of your boat first – what kind of water, how fast, how many people – these are what will dictate the best type of boat for you to build.

If you primarily intend to fish in rivers, especially smaller, fast moving rivers, you'll want a drift boat, that is one that is primarily intended to drift down rivers. There are two types of these, the Western style, sometimes called, McKenzie River drift boats, and Midwestern style drift boats less for canyon shooting in the mountainous West, and more for smaller rivers and streams common throughout the US. The Midwestern style can be rowed much faster and with more control than the Western types intended only for drifting downriver, where the oars are only used for keeping the boat pointed downriver.

If you intend to fish on lakes, bays and protected waters, you have a choice of quite a few designs. If you intend to both row and use moderate power, there are few better choices than a Carolina style dory. These easy-to-build boats get up and plane easily, carry lots of load, are quite stable and yet still may be rowed in a pinch.

If you want to go fast, under primarily engine power, and still plan to mostly fish in wide rivers, lakes, bays, etc., a semi-vee or full vee bottom power boat may be your best choice., These come from smaller – two passenger sizes, easily tailored behind a small car, all the way to big, 6 or 8 passenger models that can also handle sea conditions. Another option for this kind of conditions is the Pacific power dory. These highly stable and efficient hulls can outperform commercially made fiberglass models and can be built for a fraction of what a new boat costs.

If you'd like a man-powered or small engine boat you can toss in the back of a pickup or on a car roof and head to a stream, lake, bay or bayou, consider one of the ultra-light boats with plans available. They come in various shapes, from prams and dories, to canoes and kayaks. Larger sea-kayaks are suitable for fishing and waterfowl hunting. Using modern materials some of these boats can weigh as little as 40 lbs so can be carried to the water with one hand.

Finally, if you want to use your boat to fish in the ocean, you'll be faced with very different conditions than in protected waters so need to look for a boat designed for ocean conditions. Vee bottom Carolina dories, Pacific power dories, and vee bottom center console boats are all suitable for coastal conditions, and also will outperform heavier factory made boats and may be used with smaller, more economical engines.

For offshore conditions, very specialized craft are called for. Grand Banks dories are some of the most seaworthy boats ever designed. They'll power through any weather, though they're no speed demons, and can also be sailed. In 1876 (the USA's 100th birthday year) an 18-foot open dory, named the Centennial was used on the first single-handed North Atlantic crossing from New York to England. Other candidates for home built offshore fishing boats include Hawaiian sampans, mullet skiffs, and larger vee bottom Carolina dories. Each has their pluses and minuses, depending on whether speed, economy, or a smooth ride is the more important characteristic.

Jeff Spira is a naval architect, marine engineer, writer and historian offering custom design easy to build boat plans at the <http://www.spirainternational.com/> Spira International Easy To Build Boat Plans website. Learn about boat building including stitch and glue, download a free pdf ebook boat plan with illustrations, or watch Jeff's boat building videos as featured on YouTube.