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## **Fishing with the family**

By Uncle Bob

Among the fish you could land at a kelong are barracuda (above) and trevally (below). - Picture by MENG YEW CHOONG

Moving on from landing small stuff like whiting at the beach, let's try fishing at kelongs.

These structures, built on stilts over the sea, were originally used to trap fish. However, nowadays, they are often used by anglers and almost resemble little resorts with basic facilities.

Kelongs provide a stable platform to fish from, with a lot of space and fresh air. Common catches at kelongs are what anglers refer to as "baitfish".

A more appropriate word would be schooling fish as they travel in schools and range in size from 10cm to 20cm – selar and tamban are the most common.

The larger fish include the barracuda, cobia, threadfin salmon, mackerel and many other coastal fish that feed on the abundant baitfish gathered at the kelong.

Kelongs are great places for an affordable family holiday as most kids love the thrill of catching some fish. They will be even more excited when they get to eat what they catch.

Most kelongs will oblige with the cooking, at no extra charge. Packages include all meals (occasionally supplemented by your personal Catch Of The Day), free flow of drinks like Chinese tea and coffee, and a clean place to rest for the night.

Most kelongs restrict the use of fresh water as it has to be shipped in from the mainland. However, there is enough for a nice clean shower (limited to one a day at some kelongs). Drinking water is never in short supply, though.

If fishing is not your game, then the daily trip to the nearest island beach – provided by most kelongs at no extra cost – for some swimming or snorkelling may be your cup of tea. Or why not settle down to a good book accompanied by fresh sea breezes?

So there is something for everyone at a kelong – a good way to improve family bonding.

As for me, there is no better place for a good wine and cigar to go with great company. For these pleasures, you need to Bring Your Own, including the wine glasses.

### **Kelong fishing gear**

The 6ft (1.8m) rod you bought for beach fishing can still be used but it's not ideal, as that rod is designed for one or two small fish at a time.

Whereas in kelong fishing, you get as many as six fish with a single drop of the hooks. For this, a stronger rod rated for at least 12lbs-20lbs (5.4kg-9kg) will work better.

Lengths of 6ft to 7ft (2m) will be comfortable as longer rods, though usable, will be cumbersome. A spinning reel that will hold about 100m of 15lb (6.8kg) or 20lb line will match the rod nicely.

If you plan to use the same rod for the bigger fish, use a larger reel that can spool in at least twice the amount of line.

Add in some sinkers, snap swivels and sabiki. The last item, also known as Apollo in Malaysia, is a 6ft line with six pre-tied hooks – decorated with reflective material or feathers – to attract schooling fish.

Use tear drop/sea bottom sinkers of size 6 or 8. Lighter sinkers may be too light to keep the fish apart and you may end up with the fish tangled into a bunch – jokingly called a bunch of rambutans. It is almost impossible to unravel the sabiki then.

Bring along a dozen or more sabikis/Apollos and sinkers as a fair number of them will end up “decorating” the stilts of the kelong. At RM1 to RM2 each, it is within everybody’s budget.

You can buy the whole set-up for less than RM100, but if you plan to be serious in your fishing, buy quality products – they last longer, feel better in your hands and can be a real joy to handle.

If you are a newbie at fishing, ask the kelong operators for help. They want you to catch fish, too!

Safe handling of the Apollo

Setting up for Apollo jigging – the common term used for this type of fishing – is simple.

Just attach a snap swivel to the main line, snap on the Apollo and draw out the multiple hooks carefully, while keeping the line taut. Snap on the teardrop sinker to the snap swivel at the bottom that comes attached to the Apollo, and you are ready to fish.

As the Apollo rig is quite long, please handle it with care and be observant of your surroundings, especially passing children

A strong sea breeze can cause havoc by blowing that loose line with numerous hooks every which way.

For beginners, it is best to do Apollo jigging with a partner. One partner does the fishing while the other helps to remove the fish caught.

When fish are on the hook, reel in the line till the swivel is near the tip of the rod. With a smooth lift, bring the whole set of hooks up and grab the sinker, thus keeping all the hooks on a taut line. In this manner, the flapping fish will be kept in full control. Otherwise, they will be flopping all over and a hook or two could possibly get embedded in you!

# Compiled and coordinated by Anthony Geoffrey.

Call on a kelong

# Kelong Acheh, off Penyabong, Johor  
019 7772684 [www.kelongacheh.com](http://www.kelongacheh.com)

# Kelong Paradise Waterfront Resort, Sabak Bernam  
(03) 7625 9838 [www.kelongparadise.com](http://www.kelongparadise.com)

# Kelong Ah Yu, Tanjung Leman, Pulau Sibul  
013 7212332

# Kelong Ah Fatt, Tanjung Leman, Pulau Sibul  
019 7120333

# Kelong Ah Poh, Tanjung Leman, Pulau Sibul  
019 7453019

# Kelong Ah Ngan, Pulau Sibul  
019 7712879

# Kelong Mamud, Lukut Mamud  
019 6611448