

EXPLORING TENKARA





Tenkara's Origins

- Literal translation is “from the heavens” or “from the sky”.
- Developed in mountainous regions of Japan.
- Commercial and subsistence anglers – including Nomadic Bear Hunters.
- First described in English publications in the mid 1800's.

Tenkara in Japan

- The Japanese are very specific in naming types of fishing
 - Tenkara is traditionally defined as –
- “fishing for native trout on high gradient mountain streams with wet flies”
- There are regional variations in practices and fly patterns
 - “Ten Colors” – There is no “One True” Tenkara
 - Tenkara is a niche within a niche
- American popularity has caused increased popularity in Japan

The Tenkara Rod

- Typically, 10-15 feet in length.
- 11-12 feet is popular in the US.
- Typically weigh 3 oz or less and collapse down to 20 in or so.
 - Goofy stiffness rating.



The Tenkara Triangle

Stop the cast @ 45 degrees
Keep the rod tip high to hold the line off the water

Maximum advantage!





- NOT-The Tenkara Triangle

Keep the rod tip low
or

Hold the rod like a pole and dunk
Yes, you can catch fish this way

-BUT-

It negates the maximum advantages of the system





Tenkara lines

Most common line types:

- Traditional furled lines
- Level lines (mostly fluorocarbon)
 - PVC/floating lines
- Hybrid/experimental lines (Kevlar)

Traditional Furled lines

- **Advantages:**

Delicate presentation. Nice for fishing dry flies. Zero line memory.

- **Disadvantages:**

Not adjustable. Changes characteristics once waterlogged. Freezes easily in cold weather. Poor choice for subsurface fishing.



Level line

Probably the most popular line used with tenkara.

Mostly fluorocarbon, Hi-Vis.

Advantages: Nice presentations. Easiest for keeping line off the water/drag free drift. Relatively cheap. Adjustable. Can fish longer lines.

Disadvantages: Difficult to cast. More tangles.

Difficult to see even with HiVis lines. Poorly suited for larger flies and windy conditions. High line memory.



Floating line

- **Advantages:** Easy to cast. Durable. Fewer tangles. Very little line memory. Cost effective. Wind resistant. Can cast flies that are just not sensible with other tenkara set ups. Easier to see.
- **Disadvantages:** Harder to keep line off water, but still offers a nice drag free drift.





Badger Tenkara BAD AXE

Tenkara flies

- In the US, tenkara is associated with the sakasa kebari, a reverse-hackle wet fly from Japan.
- While this fly is popular for tenkara fishing in Japan, there are regional variations on the fly and not all Japanese anglers are “one fly” disciples.
- In the US, some tenkara anglers have taken a purist approach to tenkara, which has caused some dissent in the community.
- On the plus side, it has caused some US anglers to re-consider their fly boxes.



Sakasa Kebari



**Takayama
Sakasa Kebari**



Killer Bug Variants



Pass Lake

Tenkara Techniques

- Need to use currents/plunge pool to sink wet flies.
 - The “Pulse”
- Dead drift for surface flies, nymphs and even small streamers.
 - Active twitch and retrieve with streamers.
- Action/pause with both subsurface and surface flies.
 - The slow lift with drift

Tenkara FAQ

How does it compare to conventional Fly fishing?

Do I have to use tenkara flies?

What about the short casting distance?

How do I land a fish with no reel?

What is this I hear about “throwing the rod” ?





