

RYU LIM

A TRADITIONAL APPROACH
TO MODERN KNIFEMAKING



STORY BY JOSHUA SWANAGON — PHOTOS BY RYU LIM

Go into most any blacksmith shop and you will find a host of modern tools designed to make life easier on the smit-ty. But not every shop works that way.

As I watched season one of “Forged in Fire,” I found myself immediately rooting for Ryu Lim, a simple blacksmith with an old-school approach to amazing designs. When he won his episode that season, I wasn’t surprised in the least. Although, I will say that I was impressed with what he managed with such simple tools and processes. A true master of his form.

01 Humble Beginnings

An early bloomer, Ryu found his passion for blacksmithing at the tender age of eight years old when his older cousin took him to a blacksmith’s shop and he was deeply fascinated by the whole process. At that point, he hung around shops and helped move coal around, then would go home and pound nails into knives using the techniques he had seen.

02 The Challenges

He finds his biggest challenge in making sure he knows enough about the

Left: The 4-inch drop-point textured blade is forged out of 80CRV2 and the handle scales are constructed of cast pinecone scales.

Right: The top knife is a Santoku, forged from 15N20 with a 7-inch-long blade and featuring sumi-e style Japanese ink painting of a Bonsai Tree. The bottom knife is a Honesuki boning knife with a 7-inch blade and African blackwood collar.

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need to make sure his knives are fully functional for their intended use.

03 Functional Tastes

When asked what his favorite style of knife to make is, he leaned towards more functional in nature and prefers survival, combat and wilderness style knives.

04 Dual Methodology

Although Ryu forges 90% of his knives, he does enjoy doing stock removal for playtime on his days off, finding it refreshing.

05 Material Preference

He prefers to work with 80CRV2 and 1075 high carbon steels from New Jersey Steel Baron in the construction of his knives. Finishing them off with natural materials for the handle scales, such as wood, horn and natural objects cast in resin.

06 Creative Process

Because of his belief that his knives must function properly, he often immerses himself into situations that would require a knife, including spending months in the woods, so that he can find what features would be the most important for that given scenario.

07 The Personal Touch

Although 29-year-old Ryu has a few designs that he is very happy with—and would like to offer production models of—all of his knives are currently handmade out of his Union, NJ shop and receive the personal touch.

08 Ordering

Once he reaches two years’ worth of orders, Ryu closes his books until he gets down to a reasonable level, then he re-opens the books. He is currently down to three months’ worth of orders, so you may want to start contacting him soon, before the books close again. **KI**

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