

AN IRONIC INVESTMENT



GARY CREELY OF CREELY BLADES CONVERTS A FRUGAL DECISION INTO A LUCRATIVE OPPORTUNITY

TEXT BY JOSHUA SWANAGON, PHOTOS BY GARY CREELY

Scouring the interwebs for great knifemakers can be a lot of fun — there is some really great work out there. But, every once in a while, I get a maker dropped in my lap.

I was recently directed to Gary Creely of Creely Blades and was happy to check out his knives. After looking a little deeper I found that Gary is doing some really nice work — with knives ranging from bushcraft and special use to kitchen cutlery — and it's really worth taking some time to become more familiar with his brand.

His knives are a nice blend of function-meets-style, with a little something for everyone from the collector to the hard-core user.

01 An Odd Start

Armed with an interest in knives for both EDC (everyday carry) and the kitchen, Gary set out to save himself some money by making the chef's knife he desired, as opposed to footing a large bill for a custom knife. As I am sure most knifemakers will attest, Gary learned — \$25,000 worth of tools later — that he could save \$650 by making the knife himself.

DIG
A LITTLE DEEPER

Instagram: @CreelyBlades

Website: CreelyBlades.com

GETTING PERSONAL

City: Allentown, PA

Education Background: Communications, Eastern Nazarene College, Quincy, MA

Years Making Knives: 4

02 The Challenges

Believing that grinding the primary bevel is the most skill-intensive part of knifemaking, Gary finds that his greatest challenge comes in mastering the art of grinding. Although he feels that he has become satisfactory, after having produced a few hundred blades, he still feels that he has plenty of room for improvement.

03 The Process

While some knifemakers like to draw their designs out on paper with a pencil or pen, Gary enjoys designing in drafting software. This allows him to make minor adjustments and get the exact curves, length, and so on that he is looking for. He then prints out the design, glues it to his steel and gets to work on the band saw and grinder.

04 It's in the Materials

Having a keen interest in steel and its use in knifemaking since the dawn of man, Gary prefers to use CPM REX 121, feeling that it has the highest edge retention of any steel available on the market. However, he also has a fondness for steels that are alloyed

with nitrogen — such as: Vanax, LC200N, Bohler N360 and Nitrobe 77 — for their corrosion-resistance and toughness. When it comes to his handle scales, he is partial to G-10 for its durability, but also likes to work in wood burls for their aesthetics.

05 Production

Once Gary has a model dialed in, he will have it waterjet or laser cut to help with production times. However, at the moment he is working on a production model, to keep up with demand and make it as affordable as possible. Keep watching his social media for the launch of a Kickstarter campaign soon.

06 Ordering

Although he typically does not take one-off custom orders due to timing constraints, Gary will take an existing model and adjust the grinds to accommodate a customer request. He also has a "sky's the limit" policy on handle materials, when requested. But, as a general rule, Gary designs specific models and produces many of that model and makes them available on his website. If you are fortunate enough to find Gary with the time to make a custom knife, the waiting period will typically be 4-5 months. **KI**