

American 'Bad Axe' Saws

A sawmaker builds tools inspired by the classic American forms of the 19th century.

The recent bumper crop of new handsaw makers has produced a lot of beautiful tools that cut brilliantly. And while almost all these new makers are in North America, the saws they build look decidedly British with their brass backs and handle designs.

Now there's a new sawmaker in Wisconsin who is making backsaws that are decidedly American and hearken back to the golden age of sawmaking kicked off by Disston & Sons.

Bad Axe Tool Works currently makes two joinery saws that are different in every way from the other premium makers' wares. We borrowed the saws for a month and took them for a test drive. Here are some of our impressions.

The saws are available in two lengths – 16" and 18". You can get them with either a folded stainless steel back or a folded steel back that has been blued by a gunsmith (which is almost too sexy to write about in a woodworking publication).



A fine line. The logo on the Bad Axe saws looks more like a perfect engraving. The rest of the saw is at the same level of quality.



Bad Axe Backsaws

Technoprimitives LLC ■ 715-586-0233
or technoprimitives.com

Street price ■ \$215 to \$235

For more information, go to pwfreeinfo.com.

If you are a saw geek (hands up, people!) the sawmaker, Mark Harrell, will file the saws to almost any configuration you desire. However, he uses two standard filings that are a great place to start. Harrell has run a saw sharpening business for many years and has refined his hand-filing practices to a high art.

Both saws use a .025"-thick sawplate. The rip tooth has a progressively relaxed rake at the toe and heel. This makes the saw easy to start, aggressive in the cut and resistant to sticking at the heel. He also files a little fleam on the teeth, which makes the ripping smoother.

His crosscut tooth also has a progressive rake to make the saw easier to start. And it has more fleam than the rip-tooth version. This tooth works remarkably well for both rips and crosscuts and might just be the first commercial all-purpose saw I've ever been happy with.

The 16" saw I used had 11 points per inch, a stainless steel back and was filed for

crosscut. It is remarkably smooth and swift. The 18" saw had 10 points per inch and a rip tooth. It also was quick, which is a good thing with a tenon saw.

These saws aren't just about the teeth. The cherry handle has no hard edges and is quite comfortable. The logo on the blade is astonishingly crisp – I've never seen one this fine. And the medallion and nuts in the handle are just right. All in all, the saws are A-plus work, from the teeth to the tote.

The 16" saw is \$215. The 18" tool is \$235. If you are not sure what sort of configuration is right for you, contact Harrell through his web site at Technoprimitives.com and tell him what sort of species you typically cut and what sort of projects you build. He'll start you down the road to becoming a saw geek.

—Christopher Schwarz