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PROGRAM INSIDE

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BIG, BIG KNIVES— BIG, BIG BITES!

WHETHER WHITTLING, CUTTING ROPE OR SLICING CARDBOARD, **THE BOWIE** AND **CHOPPER** MET EACH CHALLENGE EDGE-ON

With the file marks being an indication of the blade's origin—an old farrier's rasp—the “Rustic Bowie” from Benoni Bullard was called upon to chop tree branches, ½-inch sisal rope, 1-inch manila rope, oak logs and more. (Kris Kandler image)

You just have to love the big knives, or at least I do. The minute I start swinging one around (safely, of course) for chopping and cutting chores, an evil little smirk spreads across my face as I scan for something to chop. That's what happens every time I pick one up. This time I had two to play with—a Benoni Bullard “Rustic Bowie” with an 11.25-inch blade fashioned from a farrier's rasp, and a Scott McInnis “Big Chopper” featuring an 11-inch 5160 carbon steel blade.

Springtime ushered in some very warm temperatures in Tennessee, which started the flora blooming. I needed to trim the tree that overhangs the swimming pool in my yard and reduce the amount of sap deposited on the concrete walkway. So let's see, two big knives, a 40-foot tree, a coil of

SPEC CHART

MAKER: Benoni Bullard
MODEL: Rustic Bowie
BLADE STEEL: Old farrier's rasp
BLADE LENGTH: 11.25"
HANDLE: Stacked leather
FITTINGS: Nickel silver
OVERALL LENGTH: 16.75"
SHEATH: 8-ounce leather
MAKER'S LIST PRICE: \$400



While slicing up single-walled cardboard with the Benoni Bullard Rustic Bowie (left) and Scott McInnis Big Chopper (right), the weight of the blades caused the cardboard to crinkle up, slowing each cut. Both knives sliced cleanly, however.

rope—yep, I had this. But first I wanted to test the ability of the big knives to accomplish more subdued everyday cutting chores.

I began with slicing up single-walled cardboard. This turned out to be more difficult than I thought. The weight of the blades caused the cardboard to crinkle up, slowing each cut. Both knives sliced cleanly, but I had to take

SPEC CHART

MAKER: Scott McInnis
MODEL: Big Chopper
BLADE MATERIAL: 5160 carbon steel
BLADE LENGTH: 11"
HANDLE: Green canvas micarta
FITTINGS: 416 stainless steel pins
OVERALL LENGTH: 15 5/8"
SHEATH: 8-ounce leather
MAKER'S LIST PRICE:
 \$400

The 11-inch 5160 carbon steel blade of Scott McInnis's "Big Chopper" proved adept at cutting double-walled cardboard, whittling curlicues from a pine stick, chopping oak and cutting rope.
 (Kris Kandler image)

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SPEC SHEET |



The evenly matched Rustic Bowie (top) and Big Chopper (bottom) each reached 100 crunching cuts through ½-inch sisal rope and 20 cuts through 1-inch manila rope, with both edges retaining their sharpness after testing.

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my time in cutting to keep the medium straight.

OK, so much for that stuff. My wife, Melissa, had purchased a new set of patio furniture, and the shipping boxes were heavier double-walled cardboard, which I figured would work a lot better. Bullard's Rustic Bowie was up first. I choked up on the stacked-leather handle and started slicing. Wow, it was like cutting paper, *zip, zip*, or maybe more like a hot knife through butter. The bowie was very controllable and smooth while slicing. McInnis's Big Chopper followed suit and was just a hair smoother on the slicing. Both knives made the box reduction a very short chore.

Melissa also purchased a clay fire pit, so I figured I would need some fuzz sticks for starting a fire. Whittling with a large-bladed knife presents its own challenges. Care must be taken because of all that blade length. The Big Chopper produced excellent curlicues whittling a pine stick. The Rustic Bowie's curlicues were on the thicker side. I whittled three fire sticks per knife for the kindling box. The chopper's thin, green canvas micarta handle took some getting used to when employing it for fine whittling, and the fileworked S-guard of the bowie was a little sharp on the hand while choking up on the knife.



The author's wife, Melissa, chopped 2-inch-diameter tree branches using the McInnis Big Chopper (above) and Bullard Rustic Bowie (below), getting more than halfway through each branch on the first chop, and all the way through in two or three chops.



CRUNCH CUTS KICK HIS BUTT

I had to get in some rope cutting so I went with 1/2-inch sisal rope. The bowie was first up and crunched through the rope 100 times before I stopped. The chopper also crunched to the stopping point of 100 cuts. The big knives wore my hand out. After a 30-minute break, I grabbed some 1-inch manila rope. I crunched through 20 cuts each with the chopper and bowie, and both edges retained their sharpness after testing. They were kicking my butt! Enough with the cutting, it was time for some chopping.

Each maker had a wrist thong attached to his respective knife handle. Any chopping with a large blade should be done with a wrist thong for safety purposes. I needed to quarter some small oak logs for use in the new fire pit. Starting with the bowie, I made the first chop. The edge buried deep into the wood and it took three hits on the blade spine using a baton to finish the split. The chopper also bit deep and took three hits from the baton to finish splitting the wood. The split pieces were then split again with a deep

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SPEC SHEET |



Whittling pine into a fire starter or fuzz stick, the Rustic Bowie (above) made some nice curlicues, though on the thicker side, and the Big Chopper (below) produced excellent curlicues. The author whittled three fire sticks per knife for the kindling box.



chop, and then I just lifted each blade up while it was still buried in the log and brought the works back down hard on the ground to finish the chop-through. In 20 minutes I had a nice pile of split wood. This is where a large knife excels.

All I had left was the tree trimming. I climbed the tree and installed a safety rope in case I slipped, then climbed back down to retrieve the knives. After the first couple of hacks into branches, the wind picked up and made controlling the big knives and keeping my balance a tad touchy. To the relief of Melissa, I climbed back down and opted for the control of my chain saw.

As I dropped branches, Melissa moved them to the front yard for brush removal. I thought I heard chopping, but the chain saw had my attention. Then I saw Melissa using one of the test knives to chop the branches into smaller pieces so she didn't have to struggle while dragging them. She was getting more than halfway through each approximately 2-inch-diameter branch on the first chop, and two or three chops into each branch before splitting it in two. I climbed down and had her switch knives. She liked the smaller handle of the chopper but preferred the guard on the bowie. Both knives chopped great for her.

OVERALL

Either knife would be an excellent choice for heavy cutting chores. A campsite would not be the same without one of these big

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blades. The knives performed excellently, and incurred no damage during evaluation.

CHANGES

The edges on the guard of the Bullard Rustic Bowie could use some softening so it is smoother on the hand while choking up on the blade. The McInnis Big Chopper would feel better to me with a slightly larger handle, particularly near the front or guard area of the grip for more control.

For more information contact Benoni Bullard, Dept. BL8, 4416 Jackson 4, Bradford, AR 72020 501-344-2672, benandbren@earthlink.net, benoniknives.com, and/or Scott McInnis, Dept. BL8, POB 52904, Shreveport, LA 71135 318-797-8901. Each maker warrants against defects in workmanship and materials as long as the knives have not been abused.

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