

ISSUE 107

RANGE

DESIGN AND LIVING IN JACKSON HOLE

DESIGN *that* BINDS

Mixing business with friendship makes
a home in Wilson a true retreat.

NEIGHBORHOOD

Rafter J

TENT TIPS

Hanging Art

ARCHITECTURE

Glass House

"MY BROTHER IS A POET, AND HE COMES UP WITH ALL OF THESE BEAUTIFUL SAYINGS. ONE IS, 'COOKING IS A FINE ART, AND THE KNIFE IS THE ARTIST'S BRUSH.'"

[COREY MILLIGAN, NEW WEST KNIFEWORX]

forever, but this steel was literally just invented when we found it. And I would say it's the perfect tool for what we make," Milligan says.

Milligan says the cost of a New West KnifeWorks knife—they start at \$129 and go up to more than \$300—has more to do with these materials than with design. "Good design doesn't need to cost more," he says. "But if you want good design made from materials that will stand up to the test of time, that will cost more."

Every New West KnifeWorks knife comes with a lifetime guarantee.

It is from these two boringly named materials—G30 and S35VN—that Milligan

shapes his handles and blades. "A knife's handle is its interface with the chef," he says. "My brother is a poet, and he comes up with all of these beautiful sayings. One is, 'Cooking is a fine art, and the knife is the artist's brush.' A well-designed handle allows you to wield a knife as an extension of your hand." Also considered in handle design is the repetitive nature of cutting. Joel Tate, culinary director for Fine Dining Restaurants Group, says finding a good knife "is like a pair of shoes

for a chef. If they don't properly fit and feel right, they can't stand up to twelve- to fifteen-hour days. And carpal tunnel syndrome can be a crippling affliction for a chef."

A well-designed blade has a shape, profile, and thickness suited to its function. "If you're chopping through bones, you can't have too thin of a knife," Milligan says. New West KnifeWorks has more than one dozen shapes of blade, made to fillet, pare, chop, or cut bread.

When asked if he's more artist or engineer, Milligan says "definitely not an engineer." But he struggles with the word "artist." "It always felt like if I called myself an 'artist,' people wouldn't take me seriously as a businessperson. Maybe now, after twenty years and having proven myself in the business part, I am willing to say I am an artist. Maybe." But Milligan couldn't quite get it out before this interview ended. *at*



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DESIGN



TO THE POINT

Form meets function at New West KnifeWorks.

By Lila Edythe · Photography by David Swift

*Let the cleanliness
of your space
enhance
the clarity of your
mind and place*

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DESIGN



COREY MILLIGAN BELIEVES everything should be as good and as beautiful as it can be. Beauty and performance are not mutually exclusive. "This holds in life, and in knives," he says. Knives? Twenty years ago, while working as a chef and unhappy with his knives, Milligan tried making his own. He hasn't stopped since. He first sold them at juried art fairs across the country, then online, and, since 2010, at brick-and-mortar stores, initially on the West Bank and currently on Center Street in downtown Jackson. Milligan's New West KnifeWorks knives have been listed in *Bon Appétit's* "What to Buy Now" section. In *Souper*, New York City celebrity chef (and frequent judge on Food Network's *Chopped*) Alex Guarnaschelli raved that her New West Knifeworks blade "makes me feel like I can achieve anything."

What gives Milligan's knives such power? Good design applied to good materials.

Until three years ago, New West KnifeWorks used birch laminate for all of its handles. But then, the Vermont factory that made the handles burned down. "It was the only factory in the country that did that work," Milligan says. He had to find a replacement. After months of searching, Milligan discovered G10, a glass-epoxy composite originally developed for use in computer motherboards. Extremely heat- and water-resistant, it had never before been used as the handle of a kitchen knife. "Before I started using it, as far as knives go, it was only used to make Rambo-type, military-grade knives," Milligan says. "It is literally the most bulletproof thing anyone has ever made a kitchen knife out of."

Milligan has used several different types of steel—sourcing it from as far away as Sweden and Japan—for his blades since founding New West KnifeWorks. Six years ago, SHVN Powder Metal Steel became commercially available. Made in the U.S., the technology behind this steel makes astrophysics sound simple. The result is steel that is amazingly light and capable of maintaining its structural integrity even when thin. Also, it is durable and stain-resistant. "Steel has been around