



Step-by-Step Knifemaking: You Can Do It!

By David Boye

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Step-by-Step Knifemaking: You Can Do It! By David Boye

A knife is the most basic tool, and the average adult uses a knife almost every day. Yet there are very few individually made knives in existence, and few people who know how to make knives. Step by Step Knifemaking, by master knifemaker David Boye, is widely regarded as the classic on the art of handcrafted knives. Thorough, clear, detailed instructions guide the reader through each step in how to make a knife. Generously illustrated with photos and drawings on most pages, this book reads like a one-on-one workshop with a thoughtful teacher. The reader is led to discover the spiritual connection between himself and his work, to develop his sense of artistry, and to acquire practical skills for self-sufficiency. Completely self-taught, the author guides the beginning knifemaker through the thinking processes necessary to make a knife; inspires confidence in the reader to begin at his own skill level; and shows how it can be done on a financial shoestring. Topics covered include tools, setting up a shop, knife design, grinding, heat treating, polishing, sharpening, blade etching, sheath making, and more. Boye's outdoor knives, kitchen cutlery, and utility knives are functional and "peace-loving," and the chapter on etching designs into the blades is one of the few guides to this unique art in print. With over 175,000 copies in print, Step by Step Knifemaking has deeply moved thousands to involve themselves in this craft, and they constitute a visible portion of today's knifemakers. This book can impel the reader to a personally satisfying, alternative backyard career, making his own useful knife art. It is an enjoyable, indispensable reference for those wanting to learn knifemaking, become more self-reliant, or for anyone with an interest in the ancient craft of blades. "Handmade knives are unique," writes David Boye, "reflecting the skills and personality of their maker. They impart a personal touch to what would be a cold impersonal item. Thus it is with a handmade knife, or a handmade article of any kind, that there is a subtle exchange of electromagnetic energy that is transferred from the heart and the hands of the craftsman to the heart of the person who sees and uses the handmade article. Hopefully, the product will be the embodiment and expression of love and beauty in a useful, sanitary, and safe cutting tool - a hint of a deeper, more profound spirit in the process of living." 272 pages; 170 illustrations; 155 photographs.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Boye is smart and original, and if you like his style you can learn here how he makes it." -- *Blade Magazine*

From the Publisher

Knifemaking may strike you as a curious endeavor. With so many good knives available, you might ask, why would anyone want to make one by hand?

That very question coursed through my mind when a friend who worked in the office next to mine began talking to me about the knives he was making. Almost every day he would work the word knife into our conversations in some way. And samples of the different blades he was making would be placed casually on his desk, used as paperweights and letter openers.

I was surprised by the beauty and especially the uniqueness of those handmade knives. They were sleek and graceful, with a more personal and mellow look than commercial knives. I knew that my friend was strictly a beginner at this craft. And he had no great amount of experience in metal or woodworking, either. Yet after just a few weeks of experience, he was making beautiful knives.

Finally, his goading got to me, and I ordered a blade from a company selling knifemaking supplies. My initial project was not to make a whole knife, but just to fashion a handle for a blade that had been turned out by machine. Soon I was gluing, cutting, filing, grinding, and sanding away at my own knife project.

My knifemaking lasted perhaps a year, and I turned out three knives before directing my attention to other crafts and recreations. But I was happy to have had the experience, not so much because I made exceptional knives but because I was able to feel the relationship that develops between a person and a knife that is made for personal use.

A knife is perhaps the most basic and useful of all tools. Most of us develop favorites among the knives we keep in our homes for kitchen use, gardening, sport, and carving. When you reach for a knife, you automatically feel for the one that you like, that has served you best in the past, or that has some unique attraction to you that is hard to explain.

When you have made a knife yourself and have shaped the blade just the way you want it and the handle is made to fit your own hand, a special relationship develops between you and that tool. David Boye says that effectively and even eloquently in this book, but putting the feeling into words captures only part of the experience. Just as you feel the handle of a knife, you also feel the specialness of a handle that is of your own making. And when you have ground and filed a blade to suit a purpose that is clear in your own mind, you have a special, more personal feeling when you use that blade.

In this age when we are flooded with machine-made products for almost every conceivable purpose, the experience of making and using your own special knife becomes more important. Making a knife is like fashioning a key to a wider awareness of your own abilities and relationship to tools. These days, we have too few such opportunities.

- Robert Rodale

Rodale Press

(original publisher)

About the Author

David Boye has been a full time artist knifemaker since 1972. He is on the leading edge of blademaking science through his historic discovery and development of Dendritic Steel and Dendritic Cobalt.

Completely self-taught, David started making knives from used sawmill blades. In 1976, Rodale Press published his book, Step-by-Step Knifemaking, which explains how to make knives using recycled materials and readily available equipment. This popular text has sold over 150,000 copies to date, and has influenced the careers of many custom knifemakers working today.

In 1980, David began experimenting with the technique of investment casting for making knife blades. He discovered that casting produces a dendritic (fern-like) network of carbide crystals throughout the steel, and that dendritic steel blades hold an edge from 2 to 50 times longer than other steels commonly used for cutlery. His work is considered to be a revolutionary breakthrough in modern knifemaking.

David was born in San Mateo in 1941, and grew up in the Bay Area. His academic background was primarily in psychology (B.A. San Jose State, 1964, M.A. San Jose State, 1965), and included a minor in Art. He also completed 2 and 1/2 years towards a doctorate degree in Social Psychology at the University of Minnesota.

David makes a variety of knives for the home and the outdoors. He specializes in a dendritic cobalt boat knife, which was rated #1 Sailor's Knife by the highly respected, independent journal Practical Sailor. His work has been shown in more than 50 galleries and museums, including the Renwick Gallery at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., as well as in Japan and Europe. Boye knives have been featured in numerous articles in both national and local publications.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bruce Jackson:

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