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News

Our news blog is just a brief collection of what we have been doing month to month over the year, or some of things happening at backpackinglight.co.uk.

Where we can we will flag up any items of interest to visitors to our website. Thanks for dropping by!

The thrill of spoon carving!

22 October 2012

Like many outdoors people I'm sure, I've often had this romantic notion of hiking into a remote location, setting up camp near a crystal clear stream and after collecting a handful of fallen wood from the nearby copse, lighting my Honey Stove for supper. Then as I sit and listen to the bird song mixed with the random tunes played by the water chasing itself around the rocks, I would select the most interesting piece of wood to spend a contented evening in creative harmony, artfully shaping, carving and whittling it into the perfect 'rustic' spoon.

It has been a dream of mine of many years, but one I've never taken to completion. My family even bought me the tools last year as encouragement, but I still hadn't taken the next step. When it came down to it, turning a small log into a useful 3D eating implement suddenly seemed like a daunting task, full of 'what ifs', ultra sharp tools and potential accidents waiting to happen.

It was my birthday recently and my gift from Rose was a weekend course to turn this pipe dream into reality. So this last weekend I joined another student for a couple of days in a 'man shed' near Banbury instructed by [Martin Damen \(Spoon and Bowl Carver maestro\)](#) who took us through the organic process of taking a harmless piece of Beech and turning it into a butter knife and then, the ultimate challenge, a spoon.

These simple eating tools one takes for granted as they are literally 10 a penny, in any supermarket in any town. All produced by machine, in their thousands, all looking the same, and all with no story to tell.

I can't find the words to explain the pleasure Mike (the other student) and I felt as we grasped stage by stage, the art of selecting the wood, what to look for and then cleaving it with a superbly sharp but balanced Gransfors Bruks Axe. The axe work continued for much longer than we both through possible, taking the lump down to the basic shape before the knife came out of its sheath.

When it did, Martin explained clearly and safely how to apply the blade to the material with a variety of cutting techniques all of which proved very effective and most important of all 'safe'. I've been surrounded by knives all my life, but apart from splitting wood, creating fire sticks, a bit of whittling (tent pegs) and lighting fires, I had always been envious of anyone who can use one creatively.

Each item took us a day to complete. Amusingly these items would take Martin half an hour each, but the pace suited our abilities and of course the conversation was a continuous stream of questions, what ifs, techniques and general chatter about the pleasures we both were getting from the experience.

The only time the chatter was replaced by the sound of heavy breathing (indicating the concentration), was at the end of the day when our object was almost done. We both knew that one slip here, or a nick there, and the beautifully crafted item (in our eyes) would suddenly change from 'a useful spoon' into a 'rustic spoon with character'.

It was harder physical work than many might expect, but Martin tells me he has many women on these courses who manage it quite easily. He implied they tend to listen more and apply the techniques better, but I wasn't listening, as I was too busy cleaving and chopping away with the Gransforth axe!

It was I have to say, one of the most enjoyable and rewarding weekends I've spent. I love working with my hands and now to have the knowledge and confidence to tackle this task again on my own, has been a dream come true.

I did dream last night about walking the TGO Challenge and making a complete canteen of wooden cutlery by the time I reached Montrose, but maybe that is taking the whole romantic notion a little too far!

If you want to learn these skills and other Green Wood arts do have a look at [Martins website](#) and maybe suggest a gift voucher for Christmas.

Thanks again Martin and especially Rose. I've now got a new hobby of checking out the neighbours gardens for potential windfalls, ready for my next attempt.

Bob



