

MilitaryTimes  
GEARSCOUT

## Cutting Edge

Our favorites from  
this year's Blade ShowStory and photos by Rob Curtis  
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ATLANTA — Reporters have to move fast to see the best blades at Blade Show before they're sold to collectors.

Small companies lay out custom blades on tables, while the big boys ring the outside of the hall with booths to show off their latest designs.

Among the interesting news we picked up:

- The major makers are moving away from S30V stainless steel to S35VN stainless steel. The newer steel alloy is easier on knife-makers' tools and heats to a hardness a little greater than S30V.
- Tomahawk manufacturers are still selling briskly to the APOFPO crowd.

- Sebenza designer Chris Reeve said he's redesigning the iconic 25-year-old knife but wouldn't give any details. We're expecting mostly evolutionary changes with maybe one zinger thrown in based on his very smile when asked about any big changes.

A roundup of our favorite blades coming out this year:

Spartan Blades  
Harsey Hunter

This is Spartan Blades' second collaboration with Bill Harsey. The new knife is 7 1/4 inches long with an overall length of 13 3/4 inches. Its transitional blade is strong enough for combat duty but thin enough at the tip for skinning game.

Price: About \$500 as shown.



## Kiku Matsuda J-Defender

Kiku Matsuda's handmade J-Defender is based on an older Japanese military fighting knife. It's made from acid-etched D2 tool steel and features Matsuda's hallmark convex blade shape. It's as much a tool as a collector's item. Kiku is a master Japanese bladesmith, and his craftsmanship shows in his work. Price: \$470

Zero Tolerance  
ZT 0777

The Blade Show Knife of the Year features a new subminiature lock technology that allows the back scale to be made from carbon fiber while keeping the familiar feel of an integral liner lock using a titanium locking stud. To prevent galling, the locking stud has an adjustable steel tip that engages with the blade's tang at lockup. Look for an early 2012 release. Price: TBA

## Microtech Select Fire

The 2011 Blade Show winner for most innovative American design, Microtech's Select Fire is an auto that can be locked out and used as a nonassisted liner lock with a twist of the included wrench. This comes in handy when traveling in auto-unfriendly jurisdictions. The blade is S35VN steel. Price: \$475-\$490, depending on finish

Bawidamann  
Blades  
Zomb-B-Gon

The Zomb-B-Gon is a one-off, custom-ordered cleaving tool that measures about 20 inches. It \$500 seems steep, just remember that rifles will be little more than doorstops when the world supply of ammo runs out. Price: \$500



## [MOREGEAR]

Look to the GearScout blog for more knives and gear from the show. [militarytimes.com/gearscout](http://militarytimes.com/gearscout)

## DPKx Gear HEST/F

This prototype is the company's first folder, based on the popular fixed-blade HEST (Hostile Environment Survival Tool) line. The skull-faced little multitool that comes with the HEST/F has a spanner to adjust the ball pivot and a paracord cutter and will hang on to the screw that you'd use to plug the base if you take out the removable glass breaker. The back of the blade has a bottle opener and slots for stripping wire. Don't confuse this with a gadget knife. It's a stout life-saving tool that feels about as tough as it needs to be. Price: \$175

RMJ Tactical  
Crash Axe

This 4140 chromoly steel rescue tool is based on the World War II SPAX (Special Purpose Axe). Its updated blade design helps rip open metal fuselages without getting hung up. On the other end, the new spike has a depth-limiting design and built-in lumbar for superior on-spacer action. Price: \$450

Wilson Combat/  
Chris Reeve  
Large Star-benza

With Wilson's trademark starburst etched into the titanium grip and a blade made from S35VM steel, it's a Chris Reeve Sebenza with all of its exquisite efficiency and the best manufacturing in the industry. Price: \$420

## Mantis MT-9 Pit Boss

Like the honey badger of folders, this little knife is chisel-tough and box cutter-mean. It's made from G10, machined aluminum and CPM 440V steel with a 2 1/4-inch blade. 5 1/4-inch overall length, and ambid pocket clip for tip-up carry. Price: \$85 at retail, military and law enforcement discounts available from MantisKnives.com

Strider  
Knives BS

Strider Knives' new breaching hatchet is made from CPM3V steel with G10 grips and has a sharpened beard to rip through wires found in walls and a sheath that won't slow you down. Price: \$475 with trick sheath that basically snaps off and out of the way as you draw.



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