



REPUBLIC FORGE

RECON LONG SLIDE 1911

THE EPITOME OF BARBEQUE GUNS?

By Doug Larson

Readers of *The Blue Press* are probably some of the most tuned-in people in the modern gun culture, but not all – especially those who have not been involved long – know what a barbecue gun is. Stories about the origins vary, but in general, a barbecue gun is a handgun that is usually not carried everyday and is something out of the ordinary. Most often, a barbecue gun is especially good looking and sports characteristics that make it stand out as a special gun.

Most in the gun culture agree that the tradition started many years ago down on the US-Mexico border, probably in Texas, which has a long tradition of social occasions built around a barbecue. Ranch owners or hands, law-enforcement officers and others would come to those barbecues wearing their best clothes and carrying a barbecue gun. It was a special occasion, so people wanted to look their best, and wearing a special gun, usually carried in a holster reserved for dressy occasions, was just part of the fun.

Today, the tradition lives on, but sadly, the social events where one can carry a gun openly

are not as common as they used to be. But why wait for a special occasion? Some people just like the idea of owning a functional work of art, and a well-made barbecue gun is truly a work of art. While not every gunsmith can make one, Republic Forge can, and these guns truly stand apart from the crowd.

So just what makes Republic Forge 1911s special? To find out, we will look at the model RO431 Recon Long Slide. This one happens to be chambered in 9mm, but other chamberings are available. The sample gun has a retail price of \$5,620, but a customer can spend more or less depending on his or her desires and pocketbook weight.

Republic Forge (republicforge.com) makes custom guns with features selected by the customer. Options are listed on the website where the gun can be “built.” But if a feature is not listed, Republic Forge will work with the customer to build the gun to the buyer’s specifications. Before work is started on any custom gun, someone from Republic Forge has a conversation with the customer so that there is no mistake about what the customer wants. Only after that conversation is work begun.

All Republic Forge guns are hand-fitted 1911s with parts made to Republic Forge standards. No metal injection molded or cast parts are used and everything is machined from tough tool steel. For example, Republic Forge sights are made of S7 tool steel, which is shock resistant and wears well. Slides and frames are manufactured from 4140 steel, which contains chromium, molybdenum and manganese, making it tough and resistant to fatigue, abrasion and impact.

And these guns are tightly fitted, perhaps so tight that they may not be the best choice for a serious fighting gun. Many will tell you that if a gun is fitted too tightly, dirt and debris can more easily stop the gun from functioning, something that is not acceptable in a gunfight. But Bob Maw, President of Republic Forge, disagrees with that view and says that a properly fit gun with small tolerances does not allow debris and dirt to get into the working parts in the first place. He has a point, so it's up to the customer to make a decision. However, after discussing a number of things with Maw, it appears that his number one concern is customer satisfaction. So I'll bet if the customer asked for slightly more tolerances in key areas, Republic Forge would honor the customer's request.

To get acquainted with Republic Forge 1911s, at a recent writer's event held at Gunsite (gunsite.com), I shot a Republic Forge 1911 extensively. That gun had checkering on the front and back straps that was so fine and sharp, it left little puncture marks on my hand. While fine checkering shows the skill of the gunsmith and is very slip resistant, if it is too sharp, it abrades skin and can actually draw blood after the many draws a student makes in a five-day Gunsite class. But in keeping with Maw's commitment to customer satisfaction, Republic Forge offers other grip treatments that are less abrasive.

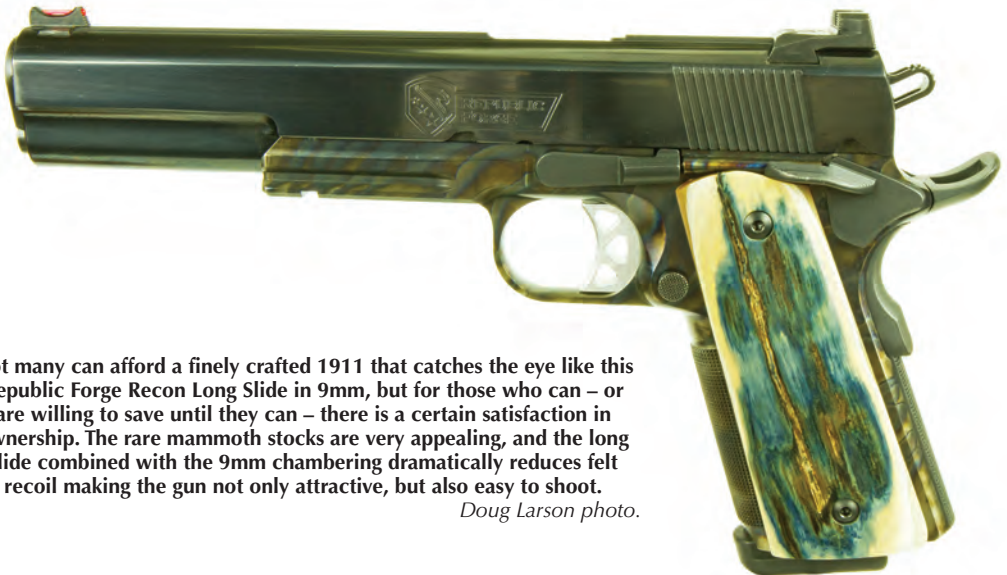
Bobby Tyler of Tyler Gun Works (tylertgun-works.com) located in Texas does the metal finishing for Republic Forge. And Tyler is a genius with metal finishes, something that is difficult and has a steep learning curve. Tyler specializes in color case hardening, although he offers a number of other finishes as well. The test gun's frame was beautifully color case hardened by Tyler and it blended well with the highly polished blued slide. Again, the customer specifies the finish wanted and a number of options, as well as engraving, are available.

One of the stand out features of the test gun is the stocks or grips which are made of petrified mammoth ivory. The material is about 8,000 to 10,000 years old and is extremely rare, which adds to the cost of the gun. Although other stocks are offered, it would be hard to pass up the beautiful natural blue colors sported by these particular mammoth stocks.

Another feature of the test gun is the long slide, which is one inch longer than the standard Government 1911 slide. That makes for a 6 inch instead of 5 inch long barrel. Why a longer barrel? If you have never fired one, you owe it to yourself to try it. Not only does the longer slide provide a longer sight radius making it easier to aim, but the added mass at the front really helps reduce felt recoil and muzzle flip. It is very noticeable. The 9mm chambering and the long slide make recoil extremely light and pleasant.

This is an accurate gun, capable of better accuracy than I could wring out of it. The best groups off a bench rest at 25 yards were about 1.5 inches, but a younger shooter with better eyes could undoubtedly get better results. And during testing there were no malfunctions of any kind.

If you want a barbeque gun that will turn heads and function, check out Republic Forge.



Not many can afford a finely crafted 1911 that catches the eye like this Republic Forge Recon Long Slide in 9mm, but for those who can – or are willing to save until they can – there is a certain satisfaction in ownership. The rare mammoth stocks are very appealing, and the long slide combined with the 9mm chambering dramatically reduces felt recoil making the gun not only attractive, but also easy to shoot.

Doug Larson photo.