

Evaluation

Wilson Combat Extreme Lite Carry, Starburst Pattern, Carbon Fiber Folding Knife.

Item Number WTK-ELC-CF

by

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22 November 2017

INITIAL IMPRESSION

The first aspect of this knife that was immediately apparent was its light weight. For those who do not care to pack around heavy, bulky objects in their pockets, this should be a joy to carry. A second but equally significant feature is how solid and secure it feels in one's hand, due to the carbon fiber handle with its robust starburst pattern. The combination of these two elements creates an extremely secure gripping surface. An examination of the knife also reveals a number of other positive virtues, such as excellent overall fit and finish, a contoured and streamlined handle, dual thumb studs for easy opening, and a very sharp stone-washed blade. The knife comes with a very nice black nylon pouch with Wilson's name and logo embroidered in white. It also has two belt loops on the reverse should one desire to carry it on one's belt instead of within a pocket. Overall, this knife displays a number of features normally reserved for knives costing much more.

HANDLE

Designed for utilitarian practicality, the handle is ideally suited for this knife. It measures right at four inches in length and one inch in height at its tallest peak. The handle is made of two individual sections of carbon fiber, a resin-infused composite material known for durability, light weight and lower cost. Possessing Wilson's aggressive starburst pattern, the texture adheres well to one's hand, providing a solid and comfortable grip. The handle also boasts ergonomically-sound geometry that assists in locking the knife firmly into place.

The two slabs are soundly attached to the framework with three screws on each side, enhanced by a stout and reversible pocket clip. Adding strength and stability to the body is an aluminum spacer bar nestled in between the metal

frame. Both sides of the handle have a half-moon contour that will allow the user easy and firm access to both thumb studs while offering one's index finger and added measure of security and comfort.

Yet another practical feature of this folder is the space between both sides of the frame. Measuring nearly $3/16$ ", this gap will grant the user a significant degree of visibility into the internal mechanism. In turn, this will allow the user to properly clean and lubricate the moving parts. This will be an easy knife to maintain.

BLADE

This folder's blade measures 3.5 inches, a nice length for a compact knife. The blade is hollow-ground, providing a thin and sharp cutting edge, and the style of the blade is that of a drop-point, which is designed to offer the user greater control during the cutting process.

A very nice feature of this blade is that it has two studs designed to facilitate the opening process. The studs are located one on each side of the blade, making this an ideal situation for both right and left-handed users. The blade is $1/8$ " of an inch thick at its widest point and offers nearly $3/4$ " of serrations atop the spine, right where one's thumb rests while holding the knife with the blade extended.

When you open the blade, you will know it. The blade locks securely into place with a loud and distinctly audible click that you can also feel. There is no mistaking it. The blade closes with equal panache. Simply push the locking lever aside and the blade will close with ease.

BLADE STEEL

The blade consists of N690CO Bohler-Eddeholm stainless steel. This is an Austrian-produced steel containing over 17% chromium. This simply means that this blade has a high stainless content. In order for blade steel to be declared "stainless" the chromium content must be above 12%. This steel is similar in nature to 440C, which for years has been touted as one of the best blade steels on the market to date. The Bohler steel is well known for its exceptional edge holding ability, extreme corrosion resistance and its ease of sharpening. There are many steel snobs out there who will swear that their steel is the best. I don't see any way to legitimately declare that any one steel reigns supreme. There

are many good steels available to bladesmiths and Bohler is certainly one of them.

EVALUATION

I am highly consistent when evaluating the practicality of pocket knives because they are designed exclusively for light-duty, limited applications. I do, however, like to go a bit above and beyond the blade's normal realm of purpose just to see how much it can take without sustaining damage.

I spent two weeks using the knife as a general purpose kitchen blade, preparing a wide variety of meats, fruits and vegetables. The blade is thin enough and sharp enough to offer solid performance. Kicking things up a notch, I then performed a few functions that a knife of this design should never encounter. I cut and chopped into a 2x4 block of wood, cut a few aluminum soda cans in half, took several strong whacks at a solid ice block, and used a large rubber mallet to beat the blade well into an old, heavy-duty plastic ice chest. Although the surface of the knife sustained scratches, blemishes and marks, it held up well and the cutting edge remained reasonably sharp. A few minutes with some Flitz polish removed much of the evidence of abuse.

WARRANTY

The manufacturer, Fox Cutlery of Italy, provides a strong one-year warranty. Unless one abuses the knife inflicting damage, I predict the probability of one needing warranty service to be extremely slim.

FINAL ANALYSIS

I carried this folder around for a month so as to develop a genuine sense of its true nature. This is a very lightweight knife, and I often found myself checking my pockets just to make sure it was still there and had not fallen out. If you want something light and comfortable to carry, this is it. Theoretically, this knife was designed to fill an economically-rounded niche. The reality is that along with an extended comfort factor, you also receive a very strong, capable and effective folder that will stand up to whatever tasks it may reasonably be given, and at a price that will make the wallet smile.