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Frosts mora clipper

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- Gear reviews and tests - Edged tools - Fixed blades -



Publication: Friday 6 September 2002

Description :

Blades in Sandvik 12c27.

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I'd been waiting a while to get hold of one of these little rubber handled Moras. Bjorn offered me one - but it seemed a big deal to ship one from Sweden when I should be able to get one in Canada. After some time I was ordering from [Campers' Village](#) when I saw they carried them for the princely sum of \$15.95 Canadian: about \$10 US.

It arrived in a box with four of the red plastic handled Eriksson's and all five knives were sharp enough to slice paper easily. That is a snare and a deception though. If you rub the bevels on some fine emery, then look with a 16X lens - you'll soon see secondary bevels and inconsistent edges. Well what do you expect for those prices? As usual it was perhaps half an hour of honing the bevels flat to the edge with a diamond stone then a ceramic. It would have gone much faster with a large piece of emery cloth and a block. Once the bevels are flat to the edge and the edge is straight, a little stropping with a belt and green buffing compound and you are all done.

Since I was most uncomplimentary toward stainless as found in an Eriksson Mora sold under the Normark brand, let's clear that up right now. The stainless steel in this knife is Sandvik 12 C 27. Here's the quote from the Frosts page under knife care:

"Frosts use almost solely steel from Sandvik with the Steel Grade Code 12 C 27. This steel contains 0.6% Carbon and 13.5% Chromium. This, together with a special hardening treatment using liquid Nitrogen at -80°C, ensures that the knives achieve a hardness of between 57 - 58 Rockwell C. In comparison to other knives this is amongst the highest attainable hardness levels without affecting the sharpening ability to any marked degree."

I'd been hearing fantastic tales of edge holding and cutting of Mora stainless on the forums, and so I'd already picked up a Frosts' blank from [Lee Valley Tools](#):



The stainless 5" is C, and since it's 1/8" instead of the usual 3/32" of Frosts' blanks, and because of the nice heavy tang - I didn't mind paying \$22 Canadian for it. To cut a long story short - I still haven't put a birch bark ring style handle on it but I did sharpen it and put on a temporary handle. I wasn't shocked to find that edge holding was superb - but attributed that to the more expensive blank. Well the clipper blank is identical steel and temper! Some fast measurements with a micrometer give me 0.075" for the Clipper, 0.1" for the red handled Eriksson, and 0.13" for the blank. In fractional terms 5/64", 6/64", and 8/64". Unfortunately - not being always as smart as I'd like to be I forgot to order one of the plastic handled Eriksson Moras in stainless to test - next time! Having heard a lot on the forums about their edge holding, I'd have to say that the Normark brand Mora was just tempered soft for sharpening by inexperienced users. People seem to think highly of the stainless in the regular Eriksson's.

In more basic terms, people comment on the Clipper blade being really thin and it is. It's still rigid enough for general use though. I like the fact that the 5" blade blank is 1/8" because it also has a much wider tang and so will be

stronger for heavier tasks. Realistically though - if strength is what you want, move directly to a Fallkniven H1. That's a heavy duty Scandinavian grind blade! Thin blades are light and the clipper overall is a very light and handy knife at about 2 1/2 ounces total with sheath. Let one find its way into the kitchen and you'll end up buying another for the outdoors! For much summer backpacking or hiking you want a light handy knife and this is a good example of such a tool. Clip it to your belt and you're set to shave some fuzzy sticks to light a fire, prepare food, whatever.

the sheath on the Clipper is superb. The knife clicks into place, so that you can tell it's secure. I really like the plastic clip that hooks over the belt and snaps into place! It only fits a 1 1/2" or narrower belt though. There's a water drain hole in the bottom. The sheath may be plastic - but it's streamlined safe, strong and requires no maintenance!

Your first thought on seeing the knife is that it's one that was beaten into shape with the ugly stick. Mine has yellow hard plastic caps at each end of a black rubber grip. It has a weird shape too. Like all things Mora though - you just have to use it to love it! The yellow is practical for finding the knife after you set it down, and the handle is extremely comfortable. Lots of grip positions are possible and all are comfortable. Peel some potatoes, slice some veggies and you'll see that a knife that's handy in the kitchen will be just as useful on the trail. The curved back on the handle makes this a super comfortable knife to use over a lot of cutting. Many knives costing a LOT of money could learn from the grip on this knife - whatever their handles are made of. As a little aside, I was out cutting wood yesterday and managed to drop a nice pewter colored lighter. You'd think that something like that would stand out pretty well and be easy to find. It sure wasn't though! You'll find that most people who do work out in the woods like nice high visibility colors on tools.

Back to Sharpening:

I still get some email from people who disagree that Moras hold a fine edge - and work really well. It always comes down to the fact that they didn't follow through with the sharpening instructions. It's pretty easy and cheap. Just a long sheet of 400 grit emery on a flat surface, and start with one bevel. Get it flat to the edge and keep going - you have to keep going because the edge itself isn't straight and you have to get to where it is. Then you turn the knife over and repeat. If you polish by using a sheet of 600 grit - and use a lens, then you'll still probably see where the edge isn't quite straight. Further honing will bring up a burr in some spots but not in others. You just have to keep going until you have a continuous burr. This burr can be removed by slicing through a bunch of thick flyers or newspaper. then you go at it again! The only reason for suggesting emery cloth is that it's cheap and you can have a long wide abrasive surface. You'll see that things go faster with this. One thing is for sure, you'll see the emery cloth wear and start wondering about one of those huge diamond stones... expensive!

To be honest - this is the first Mora in a while that's fooled me. I thought I had the edge well set up, and it held up well until I did a bunch of whittling on hard crab apple wood. The edge sort of stood up but wasn't remarkable. Having a look later with a lens I saw that I hadn't gone far enough with straightening the edge. Being in a hurry since I wanted to try it on the same wood - I went over the edge with a belt grinder and then finished up with a flat ceramic, and stropped - just using a piece of leather with valve grinding compound. I didn't have time for a final polish with green buffing compound. The edge stayed sharp and worked better by a factor of many to one. Now I'd done a lot of honing before - but the bottom line is that it takes a lot to put the knife into shape. Stainless steel is by its nature wear resistant, and so I'd gotten fooled by the amount of time needed to hone. Here we see where the stuff of legends comes in with "old" knives being better than new ones: they've just received more sharpening, and finally the edge has "come together". I've commented elsewhere on a Gerber Bolt Action where I'd never thought much of the steel. Naturally after many years I took it to meet the belt grinder for a reprofile job - and now it amazes me. I'm not always fast... Of course many knives won't be miraculously transformed; they were tempered softer when made so that people could sharpen them easily. Getting back to the knife in question, I'm pretty impressed now. I see a well set up carbon model holding an edge slightly longer through cutting hard wood - but that could change...

Eventually things really come together and you have a knife that's probably sharper than anything you've handled. At this point it's well worth the few dollars to get some green buffing compound. [Lee Valley](#) is the best and a block will last you and all your friends for a lifetime. The \$9.50 is Canadian dollars. You just rub a little onto some cardboard from an old cereal box, and strop the knife - pulling in the direction of the back of the blade so it doesn't cut in. You'll notice that the nice green soon turns black as steel is removed. Green buffing compound is 5 micron so although it cuts steel well, it's very fine and gives a great polish. If you want to be fancy and give a very slight convex edge then you find an old computer mouse pad, and strop using heavy paper with green buffing compound rubbed in - on top of the mouse pad. For sure the convex will be very slight - but it'll strengthen the edge without affecting cutting.

When you have a truly straight and even edge, the only sharpening for the future will be stropping as described - even after whittling on very hard wood. A 16X lens like this one [Ruper](#), some emery cloth and some green buffing compound will teach you more about sharpening than any array of fine sharpening stones. While it's easier to start off with Scandinavian grinds like the Mora where you don't have to bother about angles - soon you'll be able to properly sharpen any knife. A decent lens is great for use in the outdoors - but if you are only planning to get one or two knives, and don't care to become a sharpening fanatic, then just use the newspaper test. Once you've got your knife to where you first think it's sharp, start slicing newspapers or flyers. Count how many easy cuts you can make, and notice which parts of the blade snag as the edge gets blunter. Give the edge another 10 minutes of honing and repeat. I'll bet you see quite a difference in terms of being able to cut more. Continue until things don't improve any more. As you use the knife to whittle wood, and resharpen, you'll find that things do actually get slightly better. The more polished an edge is, the stronger it is, due to lack of sharpening scratches. If you decided to put out the cash for a lens you will be shocked by how rough your "fine" edge is. You'll also see the effects of the buffing compound. The simple way to notice the effects is just using some buffing compound. The edge may be too smooth to get a bite on some stuff like poly rope - but you'll notice that it sure holds for a long time!

The question of whether the carbon steel versions will hold an edge longer is bound to occur to people. It depends on what you want to do. For lots of whittling on hard wood the carbon steel - and best of all the laminated versions - will hold an edge the longest. Wood carvers will immediately move to the laminated and have a piece of cardboard smeared with green buffing compound handy: they have to have the knives as sharp as possible at all times. For general bush use the carbon steel will hold a sufficient edge all day and a few minutes with some compound and a leather belt will put the fine edge back for next day. The stainless may have to be touched up during the day if you do a lot of whittling - but again it's no protracted business as with the initial sharpening; just a few minutes. Where the stainless will beat the carbon steels is in processing fish and game, since it'll hold a toothy edge longer. Most people find such an edge to be much better than a fine polished edge for such purposes, and the carbon versions are too hard to hold one well. Let's not go overboard on these generalizations though: it may matter if you are skinning otter, bears, or processing dozens of salmon - but how often do you do that?

Conclusions:

1. Basically you have a light and great knife with the Clipper if you sharpen it correctly. I know it's a pain to sharpen a new knife - but it's the trade off for getting a superb knife for a few bucks.
2. Is the stainless better than the carbon steel as lots of people say - or the opposite as lots of other people say? It depends on what you are cutting, and your conditions. The smart thing here would be to order a second Mora in carbon and play. It's not as though they're expensive!
3. Don't make the mistake of getting to love the rubber handle and rushing out to order an expensive rubber handled knife through a catalogue! Lots of the rubber handles on expensive knives are not as comfortable as this one!
4. Don't make the mistake of dismissing this (or other) cheap knife. A lot of very experienced outdoor people dote on their well sharpened Moras. the only thing they won't do well is act as a pry bar.

I sure feel silly for not getting a clipper sooner!

Post-scriptum :Original article at [OldJimbo's site](#).