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Opinel Folders.

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Description :

Cheap, good quality carbon or stainless steel folders.

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A number 12

During my vacations, I bought a number 12 [\[1\] Opinel](#).

As a French man, I have owned numerous number of these since I am 7, and in age of owning a knife, but I never really went for sizes over number 10.

Many of you probably know these cheap French folders, but what the hell, they are worth talking about them, no chauvinism involved.

Opinels generally have an excellent carbon blade, well ground, with a thin edge. They are sturdy and cheap too.

Anyway, here are the characteristics of a #12:

Opinel Number 12 Folder 28 cm open [\[2\]](#), 12 cm blade [\[3\]](#), thickness 2mm. Carbon blade at RC 56-58, if I believe my file. Wood handle, turning lock [\[4\]](#), locks the blade in both open and closed position. 100 grams 10 euros [\[5\]](#) street price.

A picture of it, near a dozier to feel the size



"New in box" Inspection:

The blade is quite hard to open, but by experience I know that this will ease a lot. The lock is quite hard too, but, also gets better with age. The blade grind is flat V or slightly convex, with a very fine edge, But it is not very sharp.

Handling:

After two minutes sharpening on a ceramic stone, the edge got to an excellent razor sharp state, An it seems to keep an edge quite well.

This is indeed not a fast opener corresponding to the recent fashion on folders. You need two hands, and it is quite hard to open when new. A classical opening movement is to hit the handle from the lock side on a flat surface. Once the lock is in place though, this is almost a fixed blade, as nothing in the world will allow the blade to close anymore. Since this year, the lock also keeps the blade closed. The blade is thin (2mm) and quite springy to lateral flexion. There is a good length of edge flat [6], the belly is good, and the tip is sharp. There is no play between blade and handle and lock. Once locked, it really feels like a solid piece. I consider this lock to be one of the most solid ever made.

The number 12 is a size I like a lot. The handle is great, and fits my hand well, and can be used with a lot of force and would fit all hands, especially big hands.

Once sharpened, the cutting power is awesome, and wittling in wood is nice and easy.

These blades are sensitive to humidity, as the blade is carbon, and the wood has been dried for 2 years before the making. Any wetness going into the wood (varnish protected) will cause it to inflate, thus making the opening even more difficult.

Here in my hand



Blade locked. seen from edge side

Opinel Folders.



Blade closed and locked

Opinel Folders.



Shown with a brother Opinel effile [\[7\]](#) which is stainless, and has a very flexible blade, probably superb to fillet fish

Opinel Folders.



I decided to modify slightly the look and handling of this big Opinel, as well as down sizing the handle to fit my hand, here is the result:



as you can see the handle got a finger hole, the blade turned into a drop-point, and the handle was thinned, and made less tubular.

Other models

The Number 8 inox, ash handle, an outdoor knife, par excellence



Some other sizes and models are really interesting. I like the #8 a lot, it is not too bulky and very light in a pocket. Opinel also makes some series in stainless steel [\[8\]](#), and this is a great steel too, almost as good as the carbon steel, though a bit more difficult to sharpen. The Number 8 are also produced with different woods handles, walnut, olive...

Opinel's production is almost entirely robotized. Blades are stamped (cut), hardened in cooled oil, and only then machine ground. In parallel, handles are formed, and at the end the mounting is done by pinning the blade in the handle and adding the "virole" lock. Great attention is given to the thinness of the edge, and the blades are sometimes slightly reground by hand to provide a thin edge. Very often you will find the blades are convex ground, and it is specially obvious on the smallest numbers. They often need to be sharpened, even new, as the original sharpening is rarely good.

The Number 8 inox olive wood handle, here with a personal Celtic knot carving



Conclusion

In conclusion, these are cheap, resistant folders, almost as sturdy as a fixed blade, light, with an excellent cutting power, counter-balanced by being slower to deploy, can't have everything (*and actually, I write this for the review, because I do not care at all about the speed to open it!*)

I like them starting at number 8 which is perfect for a pocket. The most useful being probably a number 8 or 10, probably in "inox" (stainless steel).

Post-scriptum :Added 19/09/2006: I must add a warning, Never trust the locking of ANY locking folder. View them more as a last chance security than as locking systems. This applies to most locking mechanisms, if not all, as combinations of dusts, dirt, sand grit, cold, rust, water can make most systems inefficient without you knowing it.

[1] The number stands for the length of the blade in centimetres.

[2] 12 inches open

[3] 4" 4/5

[4] called Virobloc

[5] =10 US \$

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[6] slightly recurved on this one

[7] slim

[8] "inox" for inoxydable, in French