

Hot Bluing Throwing Knives

We've been hot bluing since the mid-1970s. That's right, I'm old! Back then, we blued as part of a restoration of older, used firearms as well as improving the looks and performance of newer ones. When I moved up here, I gave up my long gun bluing tanks—something to do with living in a wood frame house.

Since nothing looks better, to me, than a properly done hot blued finish, I decided to build a column tank and mix up a batch of bluing salts. So now, I can once again hot blue, but this time, mostly throwing knives and some occasional gun parts.

Hot bluing is a controlled rusting process that provides a finish that inhibits further rusting. The process is commonly used in the firearms industry. The guns below were both blued around 1980. The High Power was not used as much as the 1911, but both have finishes that have stood up to abuse for many years.

Hot bluing is now an outdoor activity for us, due to the requirement for the caustic salts to operate at up to 295° F. Since hot bluing does not hide any scratches or flaws, preparation is critical to a successful job. So, prep takes the most time and effort.

Once the salts are heated, the actual bluing process takes a little over a half hour for a set of three knives, including two plunges into ice water (deepens the blue/black). Of course, it's not scratch resistant (What finish is?) and care must be taken to keep dry when not in use, but if you're just sticking wood, the finish will last a very long time. Any questions?

