



Founder and CEO Dan Costa stands nattily clad in 5.11 Tactical Series attire outside company headquarters in Modesto, California. (5.11 photo)

The model 51061 wharncliffe folder from 5.11 Tactical Series has all the curves and textures you look for in a utility knife, and sharp lines only where needed—on the business end of the AUS-8 stainless blade.

Listening to customers is the best way to understand their knife needs. Taking it to the next level and offering quality knives designed to fill those needs is what 5.11 Tactical Series' cutlery line is all about.

The company caters to military, law-enforcement and EMT professionals, and offers everything from knives to eyewear, flashlights, bags/backpacks and specialized clothing. The Modesto, California-based outfit is the brainchild of founder and company CEO Dan Costa. He acquired the outdoor apparel enterprise of Royal Robbins and noticed, due in part to FBI training-equipment purchases, Robbins' tactical pants were the No. 1 selling product, and the company could not fill all the orders. Costa eventually sold Royal Robbins, taking with him the line that became the basis for 5.11 Tactical Series, which still provides tactical pants to the FBI while offering various tactical accessories and products.

"Dan is the face of the company," noted Mike McCourt, business leader for 5.11's knife program. "He went from washing dishes to owning a chain of restaurants and an ice cream factory, and through all those experiences he developed outstanding business acumen." According to McCourt, Costa's experienced judgment, coupled with a willingness to listen to clients, guides 5.11's efforts to determine what end users want in a knife.

"We're always trying to build a little more functionality into our knives through discovering the experiences

Knives such as the Wharncliffe Surge fixed blade (right) for tactical uses based on the needs of military, law enforcement, EMTs and more are what 5.11 Tactical Series' cutlery line is all about. (5.11 photo)



The Min-Pin and DRT locking-liner folders feature 2.85-inch trailing- and spear-point blades of black-oxide-coated AUS-8 stainless, FRN handles and pocket clips with right- and left-hand carry options. MSRPs: \$29.99 each. (5.11 photo)

CUSTOMER-FEEDBACK

cutters

5.11 TACTICAL SERIES

and expectations of our customers,” McCourt said. A tangible result of that client feedback can be seen in the company’s new rescue tool. “We’re digging more and more into first responders,” McCourt noted. “In addition to the seat-belt cutter and combo edge on the tool, after talking with first responders we also added a hole

under the spine [to serve as an oxygen tank wrench].”

The company’s knives are fairly straightforward and practical.

“Since we’re new to the [knife] industry, we saw no value in reinventing the wheel,” McCourt said, “so our two major blade shapes are the classic spear point, with the tanto a close second. The blades are either hollow ground or flat ground, depending on the end use.”

The company has partnered with Blade-Tech and Fox Knives USA for knife design and manufacture. It also relies on a couple of industry veterans. Personal defense/security trainer and karambit

authority Steve Tarani spearheaded two karambits in the company line, and Fox Knives USA’s Mike Vellekamp does the design work. “We tell Mike who the customer is, what they’re doing and the environment the knife will be used in. Then we ask him to come up with the designs,” McCourt explained.

Handles are G-10 for the most part, with several models in FRN (Fiberglass Reinforced Nylon). The XPRT and two variations each of the locking-liner Scout and Alpha Scout folders have textured G-10 grips. Two small folders, the DRT and the Min-Pin, sport respective handles of green and gray FRN. The C.U.B. Master

5.11 TACTICAL SERIES

Dept. BL4, attn: M. McCourt, 4300 Spyres Way, Modesto, CA 95356
866-451-1726 www.511tactical.com

Knife Specialties: Tactical folders and fixed blades for military, law enforcement and EMTs/first responders

Blade Steels: CPM-S30V and AUS-8 stainless

Blade Grinds: Flat and hollow

Handle Materials: G-10 and FRN

Designers: Mike Vellekamp and Steve Tarani, among others

MSRP Range: \$29.99-\$159.99

Other Cool Stuff: Specialized clothing, eyewear, flashlights, bags/backpacks and more for military, EMTs and law enforcement (including tactical pants for the FBI)



(From top) The Tanto Surge and Scout and Alpha folders feature textured G-10 handles and AUS-8 stainless blade steel. Respective MSRPs are \$89.99, \$49.99 and \$39.99. (5.11 photo)

2.0 folding karambit features FRN scales textured in a cross-hair-checked pattern. Other company offerings include a skeleton-handle boot knife, the rescue tool, a karambit utility knife and a 4.25-inch Tanto Surge fixed blade. Two new styles are scheduled for production and include a wharncliffe mate to the Tanto Surge, as well as a wharncliffe folder.

All knives but the XPRT and karambits, which have blades of CPM-S30V stainless steel, are AUS-8 stainless. Blade thickness on the Scout models is 3 millimeters, 4 millimeters on the Tanto Surge and 3/16 inch for the XPRT and karambits.

As with most everything 5.11 does, manufacturer's suggested retail prices (MSRPs) and testing are predicated on customer feedback. The all-black, tactical-oriented Scout has an MSRP of \$39.99-\$49.99. The DRT and the Min-Pin, the latter so named because Vellekamp thought the blade looked like a miniature Doberman pinscher's head, are on the low end at \$29.99. The boot and rescue knives, both with multiple carry options, list for \$49.99, and the Tanto Surge retails for \$89.99. "The top-end knife is the XPRT at \$159.99, and it was just picked up by a U.S. military unit," McCourt reported.

A group 5.11 officials refer to as "subject-matter experts" tests the knives, and



The Wharncliffe Surge (above) boasts AUS-8 stainless blade steel, a G-10 handle, an extended tang and a multi-position, injection-molded sheath (inset) with a set of two Blade-Tech M.O.L.L.E. locks. MSRP: \$89.99. (5.11 photos)

includes DEA and FBI members, and a recently added team of female first responders and public safety personnel. "They are real concerned about [the dependability of the folders'] locks, which is the key thing that keeps coming up," McCourt said. "We value their impressions and will be seeking to do some broader-based testing in the future." In addition to the locking mechanisms, the testing feedback led to recommending handles in various dimensions and shapes to accommodate different hand sizes, and to adding a reversible clip to the Scout that enables four carry positions.

I have had the opportunity to handle several of the knives and found each to be good quality for offerings in their price range. The fit and finish is fine and, combined with such features as the variable clip positions and built-in oxygen tank wrench on select models, the knives are a bargain.

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BLADE



Flat ground from CPM-S30V stainless steel, the clip-point, recurve blade of the XPRT folder is 3.75 inches. The contoured handle is G-10 and a removable pocket clip provides four carry options. Closed length: 5.25 inches. MSRP: \$159.99. (5.11 photo)



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