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Bourbon & Blacksmithing
By Caroline Purtle

Hunched over, a sheen of sweat peeks through his sideburns, melting under a baseball cap. Flames from the forge rage in the reflection of his glasses; eyes unwavering from a small piece of metal within his clasp. He pulls the glowing amber shard and places it on an anvil. A rusted hammer flies through the air, and:

Clink.

Clink.

Clink.

Texarkana locals Jerome LeGrand and Jared Horton teamed up to make “Bourbon & Blacksmithing” (B&B), a [Youtube](#) series for blacksmith beginners, bourbon drinkers and other daring individuals.

The challenge: making a niche category not only entertaining, but interesting and accessible to a broad audience.

“B&B is a YouTube channel that highlights the art of blacksmithing and our love of a good bourbon,” says Horton. “We both enjoy teaching people how to smith, and with the channel we get to introduce blacksmithing to people who are curious about it, but might not have the chance to try it out otherwise. So, I guess you could say that we’re about drinking bourbon, having fun, and letting as many people as we can enjoy it with us.”



In B&B’s first two episodes, they show viewers how to make a bottle opener from a four-inch piece of steel and a bell from a recycled, rusty pipe. LeGrand chose both projects because they’re unique and less difficult for the average craftsperson. He says “the only thing that limits you in blacksmithing is your imagination.”

Owning a state-of-the-art workshop is not necessary to participate; however, having a very hot heat source is, three-thousand degrees fahrenheit to be exact, although most forges work around 1,400 degrees.

“A hammer, an anvil, some tongs and a forge are probably the most important,” says Horton. “There’s an old saying that ‘there are only two things a blacksmith can’t make: his first hammer and his first set of tongs.’ Other than that, you can make everything you need.”

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Unlike Horton who does it as a hobby, the LeGrand family have been professionally smithing for decades. [LeGrand & Sons Welding and Iron Works](#) opened shop in 1933 and have since provided “anything made of metal,” including original gates, signs and staircases.

“I really like incorporating new techniques with the old style of blacksmithing,” says LeGrand. “I do a lot of modern handrails and ornamental iron. And of course, save the bourbon for the weekends.”

Smithing isn't the only thing viewers can learn. B&B invites special guests for bourbon tasting crash courses.



“What makes a good bourbon varies greatly with everyone’s individual palate. Overall, I’d say a good bourbon is smooth and enjoyable. You don’t have to prove your manhood to drink it. In other words, it doesn’t burn going down,” says Horton.

B&B says they plan “to invite the owner of a local cigar lounge, and the owner of the new axe-throwing place.” Everyone is eligible for an invitation, but you must be 21 or older to enter.

Guest appearances are not limited to liquor connoisseurs. What makes them different from other blacksmithing series is its community involvement. In “[Bourbon & Blacksmith Episode 2](#),” they welcome a representative from the Texarkana Regional Arts and Humanities Council to sip and smith.

“The main thing I want to see in the future is to be able to raise money to offer a scholarship. That’s a non-negotiable,” says Horton. “[Texarkana] doesn’t have a blacksmithing school right now and we want the money to stay local, but we do have a bladesmithing school and I’d like to support an aspiring smith.”

B&B emphasize that it’s never too late to try something new, learn a new skill and enjoy what life has to offer.

“We really hope [viewers] get a little bit of knowledge, that’s our main goal. We also want people to see that [blacksmithing] is not nearly as hard as you might think,” says B&B. “You don’t have to have giant muscle or a huge shop. If you have metal, even what you think might be trash pieces, you can turn that into something really cool.”

Photos courtesy of B&B [Facebook](#).