

THE FORAGE GUN

BY DAVID LANGERMAN

Foraging for food has in varying degrees been part of the human condition ever since there were humans. It is where the term “hunter/gatherer” comes from. In the biblical story of creation God gave Adam and Eve the garden of Eden in which to forage including specific instructions on how to do so. Many people to this day are still hunter/gatherers. While my own human condition does not require it to survive, I personally enjoy foraging.

In the beginning of this country foraging was a way of life for a significant part of the population. The common forage gun was a smoothbore flintlock capable of firing either a large ball for big game or shot for small game. The problem was that it was a single shot that was loaded for either big game or small game.

This “either/or” dilemma could be a real problem when foraging, such as when a deer walks out of the trees twenty paces from the hunter, stops and stands broadside, while his musket is loaded for turkey. Early gun makers took on this problem by inventing multi-barreled guns with a combination of rifle and smoothbore barrels. They were, however, very heavy and extremely expensive, well out of financial reach of the lower class who needed them the most.

Now we fast forward to the year 1908 where the Marble Arms and Manufacturing Company invents the Marble Game Getter; a handgun with a folding stock and over/under barrels of either 12”, 15”, or 18” in length chambered on top in .22, .25-20, .32-20, or .38-40 and



the lower smoothbore barrel in .44 shot shell. Later the lower barrel was standardized to .410 bore. The 1908 price for the basic gun was \$15.00, a week’s wages for the common man. The modern combo gun was born and foragers (and poachers in England) couldn’t be happier. However, the National Firearms Act of 1934 soon threw a wet blanket over their happiness and the 12” and 15” barreled models became illegal.

The forage combo pistol with a folding stock concept went away, and the light-weight compact shoulder-fired

combo forage gun concept came into being. This is the niche that the final version of the Marble Game Getter embraced with its 18 ½” barrel, and their competition, Savage Arms, took on with their combo gun offering of their Model 24 made in a variety of rifle calibers and shotgun gauges for any forage situation.

My father never told me what barrel length the Marble Game Getters he used had, but I suspect that it was their most popular length of 15”. As a young



man my father had a friend who owned a brace (pair) of Marble Game Getters and an open touring car. They would take turns driving and lying in the back seat, pistol in each hand, shooting squirrels out of the overhanging trees along backroads. There was more game and



maker, Baikal, rushed forward to fill the market void with their MP-94 line of combo guns. Their arrival on the American firearms scene came just at the right time for me. When I saw their MP-94 Scout in .22/.410 it was love at first sight, and it went home with me that same day, and has been putting meat in the pot ever since.

On a recent moose hunt, I didn't have a tag but was along to help with the grunt work. Moose season coincided with small game and grouse season,



so my forage combo gun went along. One of the other hunters summed it up well when he saw it and called it "the cutest little thing". With its 24" barrel and at just 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds including sling loaded with six extra shells, it is a little thing. And that "cute little thing" took five grouse that particular hunt. That gun has put more grouse on the table than all my other guns put together. It has taken its fair share of rabbits and squirrels as well, and it has also been the demise of many pests.

Savage has seen the error of their ways and reintroduced a combo gun to their firearms line with their Model 42. It is similar to the Baikal in looks except the Russians still agree with me that good guns deserve good wood. The Baikal has good figured wood while the Savage sports "Tupperware".

My MP-94 Scout differs from the other MP-94 models in that it has a single trigger, gold plated I might add. The lever at the rear of the trigger guard both cocks the striker and unlocks the break-open action. A selector switch on the tang selects either the upper rifle



less regulations back then, and the Great Depression called for desperate measures foraging for food. When I heard that story I knew that I could never have a Game Getter, but I made a promise to myself that I would one day have a .22/.410 combo gun.

Savage Arms soon supplanted Marble Arms as the primary builders of combo guns. However, the high-quality combo guns they made were expensive to manufacture. As labor costs continued to increase, Savage dropped the Model 24 from their line, creating a big void in the combo gun market. Seizing the opportunity, a Russian arms

barrel or the lower shotgun barrel and reveals the shooters choice when moved to position. After the first barrel fires a halfway upper pull of the lever re-cocks and selecting the other barrel will let it be fired. The trigger pull is light and crisp. The sling and light-weight make it a joy to carry, though it easily breaks down to bedroll size to fit into your duffel bag.

With this cute little thing slung over my shoulder a walk in the woods during small game season is bound to bring some foraged meat to the table. DL

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