


More than just a pretty gun, the Invictus IX is guaranteed to last a million rounds.

THE INVINCIBLE INVICTUS IX

A gun beautiful to behold—and to shoot

text by Phil Bourjaily • photographs by Terry Allen



Master Engraver Dario Cortini designed the Invictus IX's engraving—deep-relief architectural/mythological designs that feature dragons, griffins, parrots, lions and even a cobra on the toplever.



BETWEEN ITS BOSS-STYLE forend and sideplates, Caesar Guerini's new Invictus IX Sporting serves up acres of steel canvas to showcase its engraving. Which is why I expected the "oohs" and "aahs" when I uncased the gun at the club. But what surprised me was the way some shied away when I asked if they wanted to shoot it, as if I had suggested we play catch with a Fabergé egg.

"It's OK," I said. "This gun is guaranteed to last a million rounds. I don't think we're going to wear it out this afternoon."

Reassured, the members took it for a careful spin one by one. What we found, as again I would have expected, was that the Invictus IX is more than just a pretty gun. It's a shooter too—easy to reach out with yet well-balanced enough to shoot from a low-gun

start. Underneath its richly figured, oil-finished wood and fine engraving, it has all the competition-ready features shooters want: an adjustable trigger, an optional weight system, long forcing cones, slightly overbore (.735") barrels, an adjustable comb and extended chokes.

And like every gun in the Invictus series—which comprises I, II, III, V, VII and now IX—it is designed to be easily rebuilt so that it can last not just one owner's lifetime but several lifetimes. Evidently, by the way, that numbering system must be exponential, as the IX, at \$19,995, costs practically twice as much as the VII. At that price the gun won't fly off the shelves, and it's not supposed to.

"We make the Invictus IX for the same reason Ferrari makes their top-of-the-line cars," said Caesar Guerini USA President Wes Lang. "There aren't many customers for it, but it shows what we can do. It's a statement for the brand."

If you were to ask a focus group of shooters what

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the Guerini brand signifies, they might tell you it stands for a gun that looks good, that brings a modern sensibility to classic designs, that is made to perform, that is well fit and finished, and that benefits from exemplary customer support. Guerini has built and carefully tended that brand identity since 2003. The focus group might not say a Guerini is "industrially made," but Lang makes no secret of that fact. The Invictus IX is one of the few Guerini guns finished at the engraver's bench, but otherwise it's entirely machine built, and that's an important component of the company's success.

By using machines that can work to tolerances human hands can't match and do it at a fraction of the cost, Guerini is able to keep its guns in the price range of more shooters. "I think of what we do as preservation as much as it is innovation," Lang said. "The only way to keep making guns like ours and to keep the prices down is to take advantage of modern methods. It's progress. We can regret it, or we can admire it."

There is a lot to admire about the Invictus IX. "Invictus" is Latin for "unconquered, unsubdued, invincible," and what makes the Invictus invincible is the clever engineering that allows it to be rebuilt and tightened to live up to its guarantee. It features the replaceable "Invictus block" held by screws to the bottom of the frame. The trunnions (Guerini calls them "Invictus cams") are likewise screwed into the monoblock and easily changed to the next size. By switching out the block and cams, you can tighten a worn Invictus and move the barrels closer to the breech, putting the gun back on face so it's practically new. The Invictus can be rebuilt two or three times without difficulty.

Buy a gun made to last so long, and it stands to reason you'll be seeing a lot of it; so it may as well be nice to look at. While the engineering of the Invictus IX is ingenious, the decoration and finish of the gun are what stand out at first. The sideplates, frame and steel parts of the forend are covered with deep-relief

architectural/mythological designs featuring, among other animals, dragons, griffins, parrots, lemurs, lions and even a cobra on the toplever. The monoblock is decorated with a faux-Damascus pattern for good measure.

Master Engraver Dario Cortini, who worked with Guerini on projects such as the Revenant and the Syren Julia, came out of retirement to design the engraving on the Invictus IX. The maestro made some 40 plates that were then rendered on the gun in bold relief by a five-axis laser. Engravers spent hours hand-embellishing the gun to add depth and detail. The

result is a striking, flawlessly engraved gun. To those who complain that a laser-engraved gun is too perfect, that it lacks the tiny flaws that are a hallmark of even the best handwork, Lang has the perfect rejoinder: "You can have imperfections . . . if you're willing to pay five times as much."

While the Invictus IX is a bargain when you look at it compared to a hand-finished gun, at almost \$20,000 it still wears the highest price tag of any Guerini gun by far. But because I'm here to help, I've done some useful math. Divide the price by the million rounds the gun is guaranteed to withstand, and an Invictus

IX adds a fraction less than two cents per shell to the price of your shooting. Look at it that way, and you almost can't afford *not* to own one. 🦋

The Invictus IX is available only from Caesar Guerini Elite Dealers. For more information, visit gueriniusa.com.

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