

TO CHOKE OR NOT

Technoid,

I've been mulling the possibility of having my fixed-choke B. Rizzini (mod/full) threaded for choke tubes. Briley would seem the obvious choice, but there are many other shops offering the service at a much lower price. Trouble is, they all refuse to do work on a 20 ga. with a barrel O.D. of .700 or smaller. My best measurement with a digital caliper is .696. So...

1. What does my insufficient O.D. (on the shotgun, I mean) say about Rizzini's manufacturing quality? Is the gun below some industry standard, or is it more finely manufactured than other brands?
2. Just how much difference does .004 inch make in the process of installing tubes?
3. Aren't there more variables at play here than just the outside diameter? Surely the inside diameter and concentricity factor in, right? Or is O.D. simply the greatest limiting factor in most cases?
4. I've heard that Briley does great work on guns that no one else will touch. Is this true in your experience (I recall your "The Answer" article)?
5. I'm thinking about sending my barrels in to the less expensive shop and asking them to install choke tubes if they can, or open up the fixed chokes if they can't. Does grinding out the fixed chokes (say to IC/Mod) preclude the installation of an interchangeable choke tube system down the road (i.e. by Briley)?

Thanks for your help.

-- Aaron

Dear Aaron,

The B. Rizzini is an excellent quality gun. By the way, the B is for Battista, one of the three Rizzini brothers who make guns in Italy. The others are Isidoro Rizzini from FAIR and Emilio Rizzini now made by Fausti. The standard bore for a 20 gauge is .615". Overboring isn't as common in the subgauges as it is in the 12 today, so the chances are that your B. Rizzini's 20 gauge bores are right around that number. If the choke company you spoke to won't work on barrels less than .700" O.D., it means that they need .085/2, or about .042" wall thickness to install their threads and to account for the thickness of the choke.

The fact that your B. Rizzini might not have this much wall thickness in no way indicates a failure of Rizzini quality. Rather the other way around. Cheap guns always have thick barrels because it simply costs more to make thin ones. The tolerances have to be held tighter. Good guns tend to have thin barrels so that they don't balance like sewer pipes. Cheap guns have thick barrel walls because, well, because they are cheap.

Most modern screw choke installations on production guns are also cheaply done. They use thick chokes because it is cheaper to make thick chokes. Thick chokes will require installation into a thick walled barrel. That's why so many modern screw choke guns balance like pigs on a snow

shovel. Not all of today's screw choke installations do this, but many do. Modern barrel machinery is making it easier to keep the weight down and have adequate screw chokes, but many makers don't have the best machinery.

Briley does indeed do great choke installations. Teague in England is just as good, maybe a touch better, but Briley's Thin Wall chokes are excellent. I've had Briley install Thinwalls in several of my FN Superposed guns with very, very little barrel separation. The machining was first class.

So, if the cheaper shops can't do the work for you, definitely consider Briley.

If you just get your chokes opened up from Mod/Full to IC/Mod, there shouldn't be the slightest problem installing screw chokes later if (big IF) the chokes were properly opened up in the first place.

Best regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid