



Just 11 years old, Asher Camire already is a registered and licensed journeyman blacksmith.



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11-Year-Old Blacksmith Already In Business

It's 95 degrees and Asher Camire has just finished working several hours on his parents' produce farm. But instead of relaxing in a cool place, the 11-year-old heads to his blacksmith shop to complete orders for his own business, The Echo of the Anvil. He is Colorado's youngest registered blacksmith.

"The heat, the sparks, red metal - I just felt attracted to it," Camire says. When he was 9 1/2 he saw a YouTube video about firepit blacksmithing. Under the watchful eye of his parents, he started working on a sword made out of rebar. He never finished it, but that experience led to taking a class.

"The first thing I made was a nail. It

took me an hour to make it. Now it takes 30 seconds to make one," he says.

With practice, many classes and the encouragement of his instructor, Ron Hardman, Camire passed the test to become a registered and licensed journeyman blacksmith, which included making a pair of blacksmithing tongs. In less than three years, he's gotten stronger, starting with an 8-oz. hammer and now up to swinging a 3-lb. hammer. Typically he uses a 2 or 2 1/2-lb. hammer to make hooks, latches and decorative scrolls and leaves.

"I usually make practical stuff," Camire says, such as S, J and twisted double hooks. The hooks and tools come in handy on the

farm, and they sell well at the markets where his parents sell produce.

"Sometimes they let me set up a booth to do demos. My propane forge is small enough that I can bring it with me," he says.

He is learning to use a coal forge in the 15 by 25-ft. metal shed his father lets him use as a blacksmith shop.

Camire likes to use scrap material and coil or leaf springs that he finds around the farm or at auctions. He's working on building a fertilizer sprayer for the farm.

For the future he is saving up for a bigger forge to create larger pieces such as gates and art sculptures. For now he keeps busy pounding away on his small forge to fill

orders and make enough items to sell at the Colorado Farm and Art Market in Colorado Springs.

And, to teach and share his passion with others, he makes YouTube videos (The Echo of the Anvil).

"Go to YouTube," he suggests to wannabe blacksmiths, and take classes to learn as much as you can. "If you want it to be a business, you need a good work ethic."

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McNab Dog Breed Has Tremendous Herding Skills

In the late 1800's Alexander McNab, a Scottish rancher who'd relocated to California, decided he needed a special breed of dog to handle the tough landscape around his ranch near Hopland. By crossing the Scottish Collies he'd brought to this country with dogs owned by the Basque herders in his area, he created the McNab Shepherds, a breed that now works extensively in the western U.S., Germany and as far away as Japan.

Weighing between 40 and 50 lbs., the highly trainable McNabs are supreme herding dogs with an ability to lead livestock from the front of the herd or drive them from the back. McNabs are known for the excellent endurance required for long days in difficult conditions.

"One dog can handle about 50 head of cattle at a time, or a team of 3 or 4 dogs can easily herd around 300 head for a day," says Alvina Butti, president of the McNab Shepherd Registry. This medium-size dog is typically black or red with white feet, face and belly, but it can also be tri-colored, or just black, with a short coat.

McNab dogs can also vary in ear structure. Their ear shape is always a perfect triangle, but the ears could stand up at attention, hang down loosely, or anything in between.

When its work is done, a McNab will still have enough stamina to be a playful and loyal family pet. "They're very protective of their family and home," says Butti. The breed is known to generally be in good health with few genetic health issues. Their life span is 10 to 15 years.

Although the McNab breed has been around for about 150 years, its official registry began in 2014. The registry works to uphold and preserve the breed for generations to come.



McNab Shepherd dogs are typically black and white or red and white. Their triangle-shaped ears can stand up or fold down.

Because McNabs are becoming more geographically wide spread, people are finding more ways to put their energy and intelligence to good use. They're helping with service and therapy, search and rescue, evidence, archaeology and many dog sports. McNabs are ideal for herding cattle and can also herd geese, goats, sheep, llamas and horses. "They are the most versatile working dog breed there is," says Butti, "and people can train them to do more than one of these tasks at a time. They're brilliant."

Currently there are about 15 registered McNab breeders in the western U.S., in Colorado, Montana, Texas and Florida. McNab pups typically cost from \$600 to \$800.

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How To Make Black Walnut Syrup

"It's good in your morning coffee," says Lester Peters about the black walnut candy he likes to add for sweetener. As he enjoys it, he can look out the window at the black walnut trees he collected sap from to make syrup and candy with the help of his wife, Linda.

"We were surprised when we learned the settlers used different varieties of trees for sap, including nut trees, maples, birch, alder and many others," Linda notes. The couple decided to tap the 20 or so black walnut trees in their yard 3 springs ago, and they've been doing it ever since.

"It's as sweet as maple syrup but has a different flavor," Lester says, noting it's a mild flavor and not at all bitter.

The process is similar to tapping maple trees starting in late winter/early spring when day temperatures are above freezing and day temperatures drop below freezing at night. He drills holes in the trees to insert plastic connectors for 1/4-in. tubing that drips into a milk jug.

Peters notes that the trees don't produce a lot of sap, about 2 gal. a day total, but he accumulates enough to make a couple dozen pints of syrup with some left over to make candy. Like maple sap, it takes about 40 gal. of sap per gallon of syrup. After straining the sap, he pours it into a 5-gal. turkey cooker and boils it for several hours until there is only about an inch of syrup left to finish boiling down on the kitchen stove. To make candy, it's cooked longer - to 235F degrees - then poured into molds.

"It's very simple. Anybody can do it," Peters says.

He plans to continue the spring time tradition and notes that he also has birch trees he could tap.

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Black walnut syrup "is as sweet as maple syrup but has a different flavor," says Peters.