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For several months, “it” was shrouded in mystery. Benelli had announced it was coming out with a totally new 12 gauge shotgun, but was very secretive with the details. Until now.

by J. Wayne Fears

In March, as a member of the North American Hunting Club Shooting Advisory Council, I was invited to join five other knowledgeable gun writers to be the first to not only shoot Benelli’s new Vinci shotgun, but shoot it thousands of times at Argentina doves.

Upon arriving at the Pica Zuro...
Lodge, 60 miles north of Córdoba, we were given our first look at the new gun. At first glance you can see the lightweight (64-pound) Vinci is a very modern shotgun, made from Space Age materials. It comes packed in a high-impact plastic carrying case and is broken down into three modules—barrel/receiver module, trigger group/forearm module and buttstock module—and can be completely assembled without tools in a minute or less.

The action is inertia driven, capable of cycling anything from 2½-inch dove loads to heavy-duty 3-inch turkey loads without any adjustments. The entire operating system, including the short bolt and return spring, functions on the same axis as the bore. The trigger has the physical properties of Benelli’s R-1 rifle trigger, and there’s a greatly improved ergonomic relationship between the wrist position and the trigger angle. The barrel and choke tubes are called the Crio System—frozen to minus 300 degrees Fahrenheit to relieve stresses and uneven grain structure, resulting in denser, more uniform, shot patterns.

One of the Benelli engineers demonstrated how easy it is to disassemble the Vinci’s simple—but functional—bolt. Without tools, it took him less than a minute. He showed us how the design of the bolt reduced movement during recoil, resulting in less muzzle jump and enabling quick second and third shots. Also, cleaning would be quick and easy.

The stock is a polymer QuadraFit Buttstock with Comfortech Plus, which can easily be adjusted to give the shooter a custom fit. Perhaps what’s more important is the stock—when combined with the overall design of the gun and the new operating system—results in as much as 72 percent reduced felt recoil.

The Proving Grounds

The Vinci was impressive in the dove fields. Armed with two Vincis, I shot 170 boxes of shotshells, 4,250 shots. Not once did I have a malfunction, other than three shotshells that failed to fire. At the end of the shooting, my shoulder was not bruised, nor my cheekbone sore. That speaks volumes, because 5 years ago I had an ATV accident that shattered my right shoulder into seven pieces, so I’m very recoil conscious.

Many things impressed me beyond the reduced recoil. The guns were so balanced that it was like shooting a high-dollar, fitted, over/under shotgun. Muzzle jump was slight, and I could get back on targets as fast as I could pull the trigger. That resulted in some of the most accurate dove shooting I’ve ever done.

Others on the hunt shot as much or more than me—a lifetime of shooting for most shotguns. Their shooting results were similar to mine—no bruises, no malfunctions, little muzzle flip and hits in the 60-80 percent range using improved-cylinder choke tubes. One thing we all noticed was how clean the Vinci shot. They were lightly cleaned each evening and gave malfunction-free shooting each day.

In all, 12 production Vincis were shot 87,950 times without a malfunction and with a high percentage of hits, many out to 70 yards.

The Vinci comes in black, Max-4 HD or Realtree APG finish. Barrel lengths are 26 or 28 inches and overall length is 45 or 47 inches. All models feature a ventilated rib with red-bar front sight and metal mid-sight. The receiver is drilled and tapped for scope mounting, and each gun comes with a set of Crio choke tubes. The Vinci has an MSRP of $1,379-$1,479, depending on the version desired.

What did I like most about the Vinci? It really did greatly reduce felt recoil, and muzzle flip was minimal. It’s easy to disassemble and clean, and it comes in a fitted compact gun case that looks like a musical instrument case, which is great for hassle-free traveling. This was one of the best-swinging, fastest-pointing wing guns I’ve ever used.

What did I like least about the new Vinci, other than I don’t own one yet? It takes a little time to get used to so many new features, but once you do, you’ll never look at shotguns the same way again. Benelli really did come up with the shotgun of the future.

The Vinci is modular. Assembly is quick and easy, and no tools are required. The 12 gauge weighs only 6 ½ pounds, yet has up to 72 percent less felt recoil. When packed in its fitted carrying case, it’s compact and easy to maneuver when traveling.