Wilderness Adventures!

North America’s Five Greatest Combo Hunts
The Benelli Vinci

This twenty-first-century shotgun is innovative, just like its sixteenth-century namesake.

Following an adventuresome advertising scheme with a James Bond-esque character with slicked-back hair being chased for the long, gray case he was carrying, the new Benelli Vinci was unveiled on March 31. Named for the sixteenth-century Italian engineer, painter, and scientist Leonardo da Vinci, who was centuries ahead of his time in thinking, the Vinci is a true twenty-first-century shotgun.

Don't get the idea that the Benelli Vinci is some kind of death ray. It's a normal shotgun, with some innovative twists. Benelli's reliable inertia-driven operating system has been straightened and is easy to clean and lubricate. The ConforTech stock has been enhanced to better kill recoil, and cryogenic-treated barrels and chokes have been a feature for some time. The polymer/steel-style construction adopted from the Benelli Nova pump isn't new, either, but when it's all in the mix, and we throw in modular construction, the Vinci is truly new.

I recall when I was assigned to test and write about the Benelli Nova. I regarded it as a polymer-clad monstrosity—until I shot it, and was immediately taken by its fine handling. I long ago lost my bias against similar guns, and when applied to the Vinci, I was pleased. After all, with camo coating and its simple-to-service components, what more rugged and better gun could you want?

The gun comes in the aforementioned mysterious gray case. Open it, and there lies three pieces: the barrel/receiver, the buttstock, and the trigger/fore-end/magazine. The receiver and barrel are one solid unit that contains the straight-line inertia operating system; no more spring and follower in the buttstock to accumulate action-stopping sludge. The shim-adjustable buttstock is the second component. Align the white dot on the stock with the groove atop the receiver, push in and twist it until the arrow aligns with the witness mark on the shim, and the barrel/receiver and stock are assembled—with the new gun, some muscle was needed to get it together and apart the first few times.

The trigger/fore-end is then aligned with a notch in it and a pointed protrusion on the right side of the receiver, then the group is pushed rearward until it completely meets the buttstock. The magazine is then turned clockwise a small part of a turn, and a button snaps up, locking the assembly to the barrel. Takedown into the three components is equally fast; depress the button on the fore-end, twist the magazine tube counterclockwise, remove the trigger/fore-end, twist off the stock, and you're back to the original three sections.

The inertia system disassembles by pushing down a steel ring at the rear of the action that enables the whole system to be removed through the back of the cylindrical receiver. Disassembly of the bolt requires no tools and is idiot-proof... it only goes together one way.

I took a Vinci to Uruguay for a great June duck hunt with Trek Safa-
ris, where I fired 525 rounds of 1½-ounce No. 5s over five days without so much as a single malfunction. Prior to departure I shot a couple of boxes of steel target loads to make sure all was right, again without a hiccup; nearly 600 perfect cycles without cleaning or oiling.

Shooting that many shells ought to have given me a sore shoulder, but the ConforTech-Plus stock took all the abuse. Using Benelli’s collapsible chevron system coupled with a soft cheek pad and an efficient, ergonomically shaped butt pad that spread the recoil over my shoulder, there was no hint of soreness. Too, Benelli takes pride in stating that the ConforTech-Plus stock permits faster target acquisition for a second shot than its competitors. What makes this even more interesting is that the Vinci is a 6.9-pound shotgun. The cumulative recoil would have been brutal in such a light gun had it not been so well engineered.

The trigger guard resembles Benelli’s R1 rifle, and the trigger is by far the best trigger I’ve encountered in a repeating shotgun; light and crisp. The safety is ahead of the trigger a la the Winchester Model 12, and while it was a stretch for my short trigger finger, it was easy to use. The action release is bold and easy to find, and because the bottom of the action is sculpted to guide the shells into the magazine, stuffing it with fresh rounds was fluid. The bolt lock has been embedded in the front of the trigger guard. Unloading the magazine is also a snap—push up the carrier, then press the rear of the double-ended action release and the round pops out into your hand.

If the Vinci is not the ultimate semiauto, it isn’t far from it. The weight is distributed so that it points well, recovery from a first or second shot is instant, and recoil is mild. Gunwriter Layne Simpson wrote, “It carries like a .410, shoulders like a 20, and shoots like a 12.” I wish I’d said that, because that pretty well sums up the Vinci.

### The Benelli Vinci: Specs

- **Maker:** Benelli USA, 301/283-6981; www.benelliusa.com
- **Type:** Inertia-operated semi-automatic
- **Gauge:** 12, 2 3/4- and 3-inch
- **Barrel length:** 26 and 28
- **Chokes:** C, IC, M, IM, F tubes
- **Weight:** 6.9 lbs.
- **Finish:** Black, Max-4 HD, Realtree APG
- **MSRP:** $1,379 to $1,479

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