
Product Review

The Reiter Bamboo Oven

by Bob Maulucci

I have long been searching for the ideal way to heat treat and temper my rods. I have tried flaming, air gun ovens, flaming on both pith and enamel sides, and building nodeless rods with the heat treating being done in my kitchen oven. It has been a struggle to find the right oven. I have never found flaming only to deliver the crisp action that I desire, and I found my light toned nodeless rods to be snappy little sticks that I like quite a bit. The heat gun oven has caused me to throw out more blanks than I have kept, mostly due to my inability to build a more efficient oven. I believe the heat gun oven and its principles are promising, but I have created “the flaming bazooka of death” one time too many due to uneven distribution of the heat inside my stove pipe oven. Glad I used it outside 9 out of 10 times.



I have always been an admirer of Wayne Cattanach’s mica strip ovens. The design affords the rodmaker with many useful opportunities to make a better rod. The only problem was...if I could not build a good heat gun oven,

what on earth was I in for with this design? With Bret Reiter’s introduction of the Reiter Bamboo Oven, my prayers seem as if they have been answered. While I admire the self-sufficient nature of many of the rodmakers I know, I will never hesitate to spend money on a sound product that will enhance the performance of my rods. Since spending some time with Bret at the June 2001 Grayrock Rodmakers Gathering in Grayling, MI, I knew that this was the oven for me.

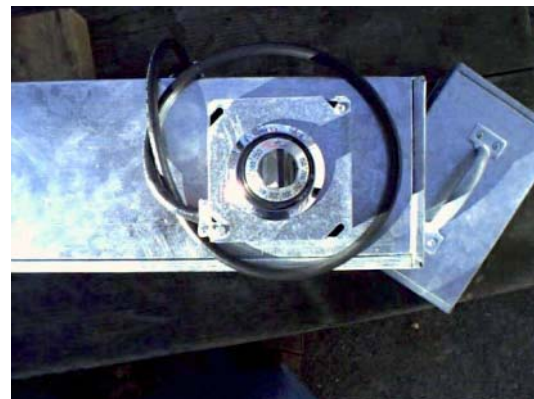
At \$800, the Reiter Bamboo Oven builds upon the design principles laid out in Cattanach’s book, **Handcrafting Bamboo Fly Rods**. Bret acknowledges Cattanach’s design as the impetus behind his new release.

“I made my first oven back when WCs book came out and I decided to make them commercially because no one else was doing it and all I ever saw were heatgun ovens. I heard so many horror stories about the heatgun ovens I decided I would make an oven for the guys who wanted better control of their heat treating and who were tired of ruined strips because of the uneven heating you get from the heatgun and flame induced ovens.”

And better control the oven does provide. I have used the oven for three months now, and I have nothing but good things to say regarding it. Using the principles of heat treating explored in Bob Milward’s book and the “The Dilemma of Heat” by rodmaker Adam Vigil (found later in this issue), I have used to Reiter oven to not only heat treat but to dry cane and heat set glues.

I enjoy the look of a flamed rod, and I lightly flame the bamboo before I split and straighten nodes. After rough tapering the strips in my beveller, I plane a taper into them, leaving .030" oversize strips. I bind the strips together by hand and then I put them in the oven that has been preheating for 10-15 minutes. I dry the bound strips in the oven for one hour at 225 degrees Fahrenheit. Then I heat treat the strips at 350 degrees for 7 minutes. I flip the strips end for end halfway through both heating regiments.

The oven’s temperature is controlled from a sturdy thermostat hard wired into the top of the sturdy sheet metal cabinet. Reiter has the cabinets made to his specifications by a local sheet metal and duct work expert. The



added insulation allows the oven to be very efficient and even in its dispersing the heat throughout the 6' length. A convenient handle makes for easy removal of the door to add, flip, or remove strips. The oven works easily within the average home wiring. My 15 amp breaker handles its output without flinching.

It is amazing how much moisture is driven from the strips by this oven. The mica strip design, using a mica strip supplied by Grand Technologies in Grand Rapids, Michigan gives an even heating to the strips throughout the oven's length. Flipping the strips is probably not necessary, but it is a small act that becomes more of a habit than anything else. After the strips are heat treated, it is noticeable how much more resilient they become. The bound strips also seem to be relieved of any kinks or twists that existed between the nodes prior to the drying and heat treating regiment.



With the oven, a great range of tempering options are possible, and the oven is not a space taker in the shop. I store mine underneath the bench and never have to move it, simply opening and closing the door to add or swap strips. My supports of my wooden bench are very safe under the oven's well insulated cabinet.

As Reiter states, "One of the nice things about this type of oven is you can put it under your bench out of the way and never have to move it to use it. You can't do that with a torch oven nor a heatgun oven because of the way they work. You can also store this oven standing in a corner if you need to get it out of the way. If you have WCs or any of the other books on rod building you can

get the heat treating times I use most of the time from them. I really like the way the blond rods turn out with this oven, you get a beautiful deep honey color following Maurer's specs or you can experiment like Dave Leclair is with his heat treating of blond rods. He has told me that he can't believe the results he is getting with his oven. George Aldrich bought one of my ovens and he told me he could not believe what I was offering for the price I was selling them for because of the quality and the incredible durability of the cabinet."

In the future, Reiter is intent on making the ovens available to as many rodmakers as he can. He is trying to do his best to make affordable products that can help all levels of rodmaker to make better rods.

"I am in the process of offering heat treating of strips as a service to guys who don't have the money or the room for an oven. I am also going to offer an oven kit for guys who want to make their own. I will supply the cabinet, mica strip, conduit, screws, wiring, plug, and electrical box. All they will need to do is go out and buy the screen wire for the rack at the local hardware store. I am going to offer this kit for \$695.00 plus shipping for the guys who want to assemble their own from quality components. This is just some things I am going to do in the future. I have 6 ovens out there to rod builders and all of them have given me great feedback on how it has saved them both time and money in building rods. One guy even told me he has cut his rod making by over 5 hours because he does not have to monkey around with setting up his gas fired oven anymore and he doesn't have to go out to the garage to heat treat anymore. He also told me he no longer worries about burning the place down with this oven."

I asked master builder and reel seat guru, **Dave LeClair** about his Reiter Bamboo Oven. Dave, gracious as ever, seems very pleased with his new oven.

"I just used it again last night. I think his oven works great. I've been doing some experiments with time and temp. it seems to hold the temperature very well. I think it's also very well made. I know you could build your own for a lot less money, but it probably wouldn't be as nice as Bret's and who's got the time to build an oven?"

So, I think Bret's got something pretty good there. I'm sure that any cane rod maker out there would find one of Bret's ovens way better than what they could make themselves and it works!"

I highly recommend the Reiter Bamboo Oven, and I think it will add tremendously to the final product. I have found that since using the oven, my rods have an added crispness and evenness in tempering that I was previously unable to achieve with simple a torch and heat gun oven. Bret Reiter can be reached at 616-471-7990. The oven is \$800 plus \$30 for shipping and insurance. The website address is <http://bretsovens.bravepages.com/>