

Locally Owned

HANDMADE BY MEIER SKI COMPANY

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PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED

Matt Cudmore, who was a computer draftsman for an engineering firm in Glenwood Springs, started building skis with \$1,000 given to him by his grandmother, Harriet Hanson. Matt used the money to build his first ski press.

It took about *five months* of trial and error for Matt, who knew nothing about building skis, to turn out his first pair. “They were the coolest skis ever, not by looks, but to ski on,” he recalls.

Today, things have speeded up a bit. Meier Ski’s Cattle Creek workshop can turn out a 12-16 pairs of handcrafted skis in a day. Big-name manufacturers can crank out a more than 250 units a day, but Meier’s pace is just fine with Matt and his wife Rosanna, whose maiden name was given to the business. “It’s not just about building skis,” she says. “These are local skis made by local people. We’re creating fun jobs and supporting small business in our community. That’s what we’re about.”

“The whole idea is to keep it as local as possible. We emphasize home-grown, local wood and a product coming right out of Glenwood Springs,” adds Matt.

How does a neophyte learn to build skis? Asked whether he looked up “ski recipe” on the internet, Matt laughs and says, “Kinda!” Matt began his experimentation after a buddy of his found a website that showed how skis are built. Matt started the painstaking task of building his first skis around September of 2009. “I started researching. I had to build my first press. Then I had to figure out where to source the materials. I was starting from nothing so it took me the whole season. By the time I finished and let the skis cure for a week, it was the last week at Sunlight Mountain. I just made it in time to test those skis.

“I was kind of nervous that the skis would break or the bindings would rip out. That day, one of my friends was skiing on an old pair of Solomons, and *his* binding ripped out. I felt safe then. I thought that the odds were way against that happening to *two* of us.”

Matt launched the Meier Ski Company in the fall of 2009. Like Apple Computer, the company was a hobbyist’s dream, started in a garage. The product is design savvy, but in a very think-different way from flashy high-tech products. Designed to be long and fat, Meier skis feature a clear top layer or window that shows off the interior wood grain—and also the company’s environmental ethic.

Like many native Coloradans, Matt has watched the pine beetle with dismay. “I was devastated about beetle kill and what was happening to all the pine trees in Colorado,” he says. “I wanted to do something about it.” As a result, Meier skis are made using locally-sourced wood, both beetle-killed pine and aspen.

“It’s super cool,” says Matt. “You can go to Steamboat, on the top of the mountain and look over a couple ridges and see where the wood for the skis came from.”

That wood makes the skis surprisingly light, but they feel solid. “Our cores are hand-picked to bring you the most stable fun ride of your life,” says Matt. “They don’t chatter. When we were learning to make our skis, we ripped apart countless pairs of big-name skis to see what was hidden between the sheets. It wasn’t pretty. Many big box ski companies use manmade materials such as foam, plywood, or metal at the core of their ski, and that results in a whole lot of chatter.”

Colby Christoff, who grew up ski racing on the East Coast and who writes the Backcountry Skiing blog (WildSnow.com), tested a pair of 185 mm Meier Heritage Tour skis and agrees. He wrote, “They have traditional camber underfoot combined with plenty of tip and tail rocker. The large front shovel floats easily in whatever conditions. More, I found with the big shovel and a ‘thinner’ tail there is no need to sit back to let the tips rise. These skis want you to lean forward and attack.”

Matt comments, “People who are using our skis have realized that the performance is there. They are realizing that you don’t have to have a really heavy ski to have a good time.” Matt is understandably proud of what’s inside of his skis. “You won’t see clear top sheets with other ski companies because it takes precision, care and a passion for fine craftsmanship to grow a ski that is free of manufacturing defects.”

Matt, who is now 35 and the father of three small children, says that starting a company is the coolest and scariest thing in the world. “Every morning on the way here we pray that things are going to work out the way it should. If you surround yourself with really good people, and people who believe what you believe in, and work really hard, you will succeed.”