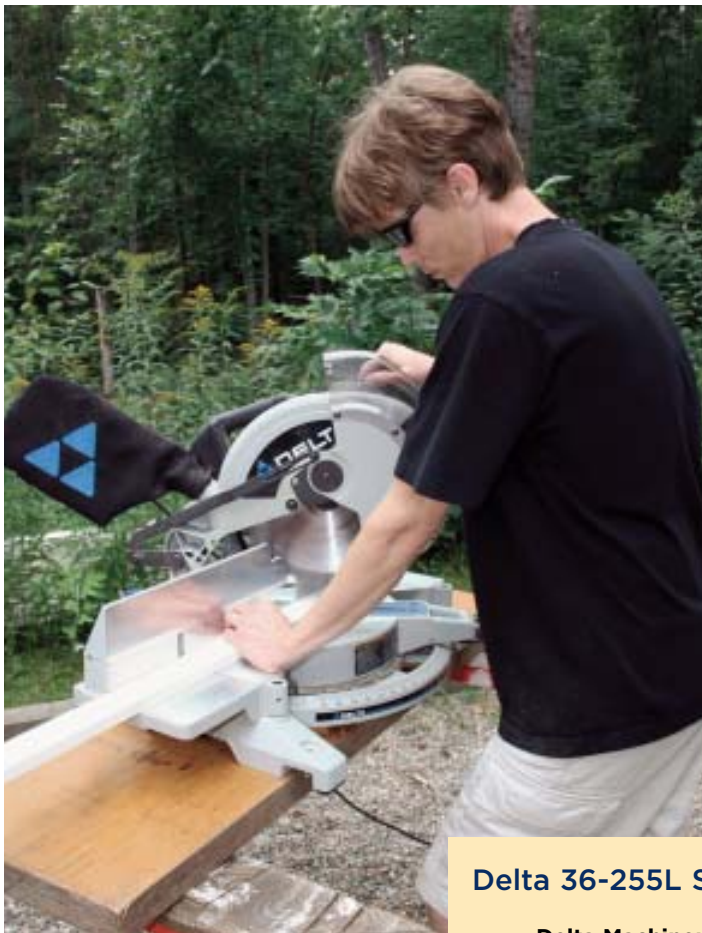


Toolbox

Delta 36-255L TwinLaser Miter Saw

by Patrick McCombe

The first time I saw a laser on a miter saw, it struck me as a gimmick meant to attract inexperienced users. Since I'd used laserless miter saws for years, I didn't consider the feature a real benefit. But after about a year of using Delta's 36-255L TwinLaser Miter Saw, I'm a convert. I like the saw a lot — especially the convenience provided by its laser.



Specs

Powered by a 15-amp motor with plenty of torque, the Delta spins its 12-inch blade at 3,500 rpm. It has an 8-inch crosscut capacity and will cut all the way through a 4x4 in a single pass. It can cut a 2x6 at a 45-degree miter and bevel a 1x8 at 45 degrees. Although bevel goes to 45 degrees, the saw bevels only to the right, which is this tool's one significant drawback.

Bevel is adjusted by means of a large, hand-tightened knob in the rear, which holds the setting secure when you crank it down. The miter table has detents for all the common settings and a quarter-turn knob for positions in between. The left fence is about 5 inches tall and slides out of the way for bevel cuts. The right fence is about 2½ inches tall.

The Laser

This saw has the best laser system I've seen on a miter saw. Mounted on the guard, it projects *two* lines, one on each side of the kerf; the exact location of the blade lies between the two lines. This is a truly unique feature: Other lasers project a laser line close to the kerf, not on the exact path of the blade, so you have to learn how to compensate visually for the discrepancy; or they project from behind the fence, so if you're cutting crown in position or cutting base standing up, the laser line is often blocked.

The Delta's got some other nice features, too: You can adjust its laser system in response to blade thickness; there are no batteries to replace (since the laser is

Delta 36-255L Specs

Delta Machinery

800/438-2486

www.deltamachinery.com

Rpm: 3,500

Blade diameter: 12 inches

Motor: 15 amps

Weight: about 65 pounds

Street price: \$330

Toolbox | Delta 36-255L TwinLaser Miter Saw



The bevel scale on the Delta 36-255L is broken down by single degrees, so it's easy to get an accurate setting (left). The adjustment knob is comfortable to grip and large enough to find quickly (above).



The laser is by far the 36-255L's most interesting feature. Mounted above the blade, it projects two lines, one on each side of the kerf (top left). The lines are bright enough to be seen in sunlight, and you can adjust them in response to blade thickness with a small hex wrench (top right). Unlike another popular laser system actuated by the saw's spinning blade, this laser is controlled with a switch so you can position the stock without the blade turning (center right). The laser projects through the guard as dashed lines (above left); the lines become solid as the guard is retracted (above right).

powered by the saw); and the lines projected by the laser are easy to see in all but the brightest sunlight.

I found the laser particularly handy for fine-tuning miters. For example, if a piece of casing has a slight gap at the top or bottom of the miter, you can use the laser to reproduce the gap at the saw for a second cut that's dead-on.

The Verdict

Minus the laser, the 12-inch 36-255L is a low-tech single-bevel miter saw. While slide saws have their place, for many applications I prefer the portability and simplicity of a basic chop saw. Aside from a smaller crosscut capacity, a basic miter saw such as the Delta is fine for most tasks. And because it's 10 pounds lighter than a slider and has a much smaller footprint, the Delta is easier to carry up steps and get in and out of the truck.

I've used the Delta saw to cut stacks of framing lumber and bundles of trim, and it performed without a hitch. The clear guard isn't too annoying, and the bevel and miter scales were accurate right out of the box. Again, my biggest complaint is that it bevels only to the right, which makes some cuts more work than they need to be.

Despite my initial belief that lasers were hokey, I definitely found that this one makes it easy to know where you're cutting without bringing down the blade — an ability that'll make you and your crew a little more efficient. It's a great saw for doing basic trim work, cutting cripple studs, and performing other tasks where you don't need huge capacity.

If you want a nonsliding miter saw that bevels both ways, I'd recommend the DeWalt 706 or the Delta 36-412, both of which have better crown and base capacity, but no laser.

The Delta 36-255L sells for about \$330.

Toolbox | Handsaws

Pocket-Sized Sawzall. Milwaukee's *Job Saw* accepts standard recip blades and is quite adept, I've found, at cutting everything from door openings in drywall to copper tubing in tight joist cavities. My favorite feature is the tool's quick-release blade clamp, which is just like the ones found on newer Milwaukee recip saws. The handle is comfortable and has a threaded end, so you can screw it onto your painter's pole and do some pruning in the backyard. The Job Saw costs about \$20.

Milwaukee, 800/729-3878, www.milwaukeetool.com.

Combination Blade. Despite all the improvements and innovations in power saws, sometimes a handsaw is still the right tool for the job. Irwin claims that its 15-inch *Carpenter Saw* ranks among the fastest-cutting handsaws in the world. Personally, I think the saw's best attribute is its two sets of teeth. The 12-point front teeth are designed for starting and finishing a cut, and the nine-point teeth farther back on the blade provide faster cutting once you've gotten started. The saw also has unusually deep gullets for clearing sawdust. It sells for about \$18.

Irwin, 800/866-5740, www.irwin.com.

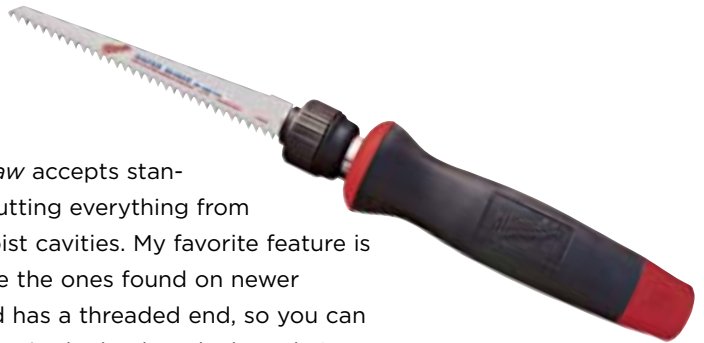
Center Cut. By now, you have probably come across or even used a Japanese-style dozuki saw; this tool is great for cutting dovetails, trimming door jambs, and flush-cutting wood plugs (Lee Valley's version is the top tool shown at right). But you are probably less familiar with azebiki saws. Like most Japanese saws, they cut on the pull stroke; unlike most Japanese saws, they have a curved blade, which allows you to start cuts in the center of panel products and boards. Lee Valley's 4-inch-blade *Azebiki* (part no. 60T05.01; bottom tool at right) sports a 16-tooth-per-inch crosscut side and an eight-tooth-per-inch rip side. It sells for about \$35.

Lee Valley, 800/871-8158, www.leevalley.com.

Courtesy Lee Valley

Multiple Personality. About 15 years ago, I borrowed my father's hacksaw. I still haven't returned it. But now — after taking a look at the *Nicholson 4-in-1 High-Tension Hacksaw* — I am ready to give it back. In addition to the standard blade configuration, the 4-in-1 offers a 45-degree blade position for flush cutting and an adjustable frame for low-clearance applications. You can also convert the whole rig into a jab saw that accepts standard recip blades. Other features include a high-tension frame, cushioned grips, and on-board blade storage. The hacksaw sells for about \$25. Maybe I'll buy Dad one, too.

Cooper Hand Tools, 919/362-1670, www.cooperhandtools.com.



Toolbox | Concrete & Masonry Tools

Mortar Shooter. I spent almost a month of my early working life tuck-pointing a 2,400-square-foot house with a grout bag. It was a valuable experience that gave me a lot of time to contemplate the advantages of an education — but I bet the *Quikpoint Drill-Mate Mortar Gun* would have made the job much more tolerable. The drill-mounted tuck-pointer has a three-quart hopper, a vibrating auger drive, and a rotating nozzle that dispenses mortar through three interchangeable steel tips measuring between $\frac{3}{16}$ and $\frac{5}{8}$ inch. With this tool, says Quikpoint, you can tuck-point five times faster than with conventional methods. The company also says the gun's good for grouting thin-brick and thin-stone veneers. It costs about \$200, drill not included.

Quikpoint, 800/368-2292, www.quikpoint.com.



Not the Same Old Grind.

Crawling around the floor hunched over a dusty concrete grinder is no fun. So get up already. Blastrac's *Grinder-Vac Dolly* is a heavy-duty 7-inch grinder mounted on a wheeled cart that you operate standing up. Unlike the more expensive 220-volt machines commonly used in commercial work, the 110-volt grinder — which can also be used freehand — suits small residential projects. The tool's pneumatic shock absorbers smooth the ride; its dust-collection shroud flips out of the way for edging; and an adjustable tilt keeps the grinding head in contact with the surface even in low spots, says the manufacturer. The entire Grinder-Vac Dolly package (including the grinder) costs \$1,450.

Blastrac, 800/256-3440, www.blastrac.com.



Chip Off the Old Block.

Demolition with a jackhammer can be hard and noisy work, but Makita is promising to make it easier — and less thunderous — with the new *HM1810*. At 107 decibels, this 70-pound electric breaker hammer is the industry's quietest, says Makita, and its "antivibration technology" is designed to vastly reduce the vibration felt by users. The hammer — which can operate on 15-amp circuits — has a 16½-foot cord and accepts 1½-inch hex-shank accessories. It costs \$1,450.

Makita, 800/462-5482, www.makita.com.