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# MEMBERS UPDATE

March 2020

**Top 10  
Apocalypse  
Scenarios  
for 2020**

**6 Best Sidearms for Shooters**

**Laser Sights and Home Defense: A Case Study**

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## **Top 10 Apocalypse Scenarios for 2020**

Is it possible that a cataclysmic event could strike in 2020 that forever changes the world as we know it? It's a topic that's both fascinating and uncomfortable. As an NSRA reader, we know you're not one to shy away from this troublesome big picture topic.



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## **6 Best Sidearms for Shooters**

Which handguns truly make the grade when it comes to actual range work? It's always a hotly contested topic and we can assure you there are lots of great answers out there. In this article, we've nominated 6 of the best pistols for your hard-earned dollars.



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## **Laser Sights and Home Defense: A Case Study**

Most shooters think that a laser sight's purpose is to help you "aim" your firearm. The truth is that the core benefit of using a laser is target acquisition. In this case study, we recount a stark real-world example of how quick acquisition speed saved one young man's life in a home invasion.



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## **NSRA's Simple Fruit Brandy Recipe**

Many preppers are aware of the bartering value of booze in a SHTF scenario. But few realize the value of brewing/distilling know-how, both today and in a long-term emergency scenario. Our goal with these simple recipes is to give you the confidence to get your feet wet in the booze making process.

# TOP 10 APOCALYPSE SCENARIOS FOR 2020

Will the world come to an end in 2020? Or will it perhaps survive, but no longer resemble the world as we've ever known it?

Though it's a topic most would rather ignore completely, there are numerous cataclysmic events that could at the very least, massively disrupt our way of life, resulting in the few remaining people needing to navigate the challenging situations that would result.

While we're not in the business of making predictions, it's always fascinating to ask the difficult and uncomfortable questions about when "the big one" might impact mankind. That's why we've assembled a list of the Top 10 Most Likely Apocalypse Scenarios for 2020. Each of these scenarios is as unlikely as it is clear and present, each waiting for only a handful of factors to align.

## 1. MASSIVE VOLCANIC ERUPTION



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A volcano explosion like the one that occurred at Mount St. Helens in 1980 is significant and did result in more than 50 deaths. However, that's not an apocalypse. But one large enough to cause an apocalypse could occur. For example, a volcano explosion at Yellowstone National Park more than 600,000 years ago spewed ash and rock over much of the United States.

If this occurred again, it would result in many people breathing in that ash and suffering, some fatally. Life as we know it would change forever with the collapse of significant numbers of buildings and the loss of many forms of travel. Farmland would be destroyed, food would be scarce, and global temperatures could drop as much as 20 degrees.

Even worse, there could be a large igneous province, which is essentially a volcano that, instead of exploding, results in ash and toxic gases being continuously released into the atmosphere. However, this is more of a slow burn-type of apocalypse and not something that you'd need to worry about in 2020.

## 2. IRAN & UNITED STATES TENSIONS

One apocalyptic scenario that is arguably more likely to occur in 2020 than any other would be the fallout of tensions between Iran and the United States.



Often times, gang warfare in places like Los Angeles results in one member of a gang killing a member from a rival gang. This is typically followed by the second gang gaining a measure of revenge by doing the same in response, and the cycle continues ad nauseum, resulting in many deaths.

The Iran-U.S. situation could be in the early stages of something like that, started when President Donald Trump ordered the killing of Iran's Gen. Qasem Soleimani in January. If this situation were to continue escalating, it could take the whole world with it.

### 3. NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST



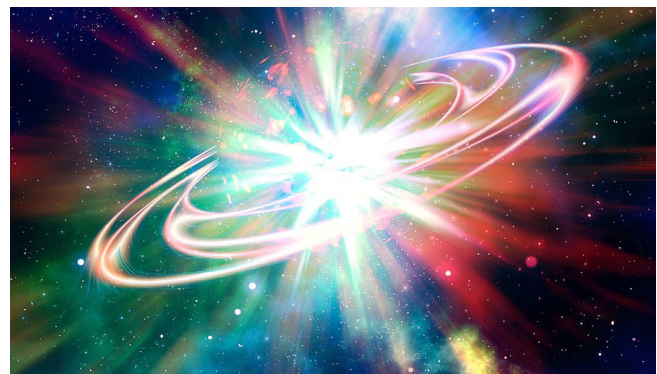
It doesn't need to be just Iran and the United States being threats to each other that's enough to spark a nuclear holocaust.

**3** First off, yes, Iran should be included on that list, even though it has stated that it doesn't have any nuclear weapons. World leaders have never been known for their honesty or candor. Plus, these tensions with the

U.S. could have sparked it into manufacturing some. And, of course, it's common knowledge that the U.S. has nuclear weapons, and countries like Russia and North Korea have them, as well. All it takes is a few to be detonated to result in a worldwide apocalypse.

Some of the things that could result from a nuclear holocaust include radiation sickness and a nuclear winter, thanks to soot from fires started by those bombs rising into the air and blocking the sun for long periods of time. These occurrences are, of course, in addition to all of the people who would have instantly died from the blasts. Those who do survive would likely need to find a way to continue their survival without access to any sort of modern technology. The lucky (or is it unlucky?) few may also have difficulty finding food and drink once all of the food and drink in cans, bottles, and other types of containers have been consumed.

### 4. GAMMA & RAY BURST



Another possibility for 2020 is a radioactive holocaust that comes from outer space. Known as a gamma-ray burst, this risk consists of radioactive particles that have been spewed from an exploding star. One could conceivably crash into Earth. Fortunately, these are rare, but they are extraordinarily powerful.

These blasts can release more energy in a second than the Sun will in 10 billion years. In fact, they don't even need to enter the earth's atmosphere to cause horrific damage. In fact, a gamma ray that's as far away as a few light years would essentially cook the Earth. Therefore, if a gamma-ray burst ever did enter our atmosphere, we'd all be long gone already.

There are a multitude other threats from outer space that could wipe out life on earth as we know it. Such deadly phenomena include high energy solar flares,

wandering stars, nearby black holes and supernovas, and more. In fact, the universe is expansive and might mask celestial threats we don't even know about yet. Meanwhile, outer space is still awe-inspiring and beautiful. That being the case, it's better to observe its wonders than lose sleep over the off chance that a component of it will wipe us out.

## 5. BOLIDE IMPACT



Less impactful than a gamma-ray burst would be the Earth receiving an impact from a sizable asteroid or comet. However, a large enough one still has the potential of causing damage that would be equal to, or greater than, the detonating of every nuclear weapon that exists. This is believed to be what destroyed all of the dinosaurs, while a lesser but still significant one could kill most people and alter life forever for the few who remain.

Some of the effects that could result from this type of impact would be fires spreading throughout Earth and debris causing clouds to block off the sun for so long that everything or nearly everything dies. Also, consider that an asteroid could break into smaller, still destructive, pieces that scatter throughout Earth, creating apocalypse-like conditions on a more equal basis in multiple places.

## 6. AUSTRALIA & LIKE WILDFIRES

The widespread wildfires that are taking over Australia, which started in June, have reminded people just how slow of a burn an apocalyptic event could be. After all, not every apocalyptic scenario has to start with a single major event. Instead, we may find that the SHTF after a number of smaller incidents cumulate into a major issue.



What's currently happening in Australia started in June, and it has built to incredible levels, destroying land equal to the size of countries like Guatemala and South Korea. Additionally, experts have recently said that 1 billion animals have likely been killed, as well as dozens of people. Thousands of buildings have been destroyed too.

If these catastrophic fires were to spread into - and throughout - places like Sydney and Melbourne, it could quickly lead to the deaths of many more than dozens.

## 7. CLIMATE CHANGE

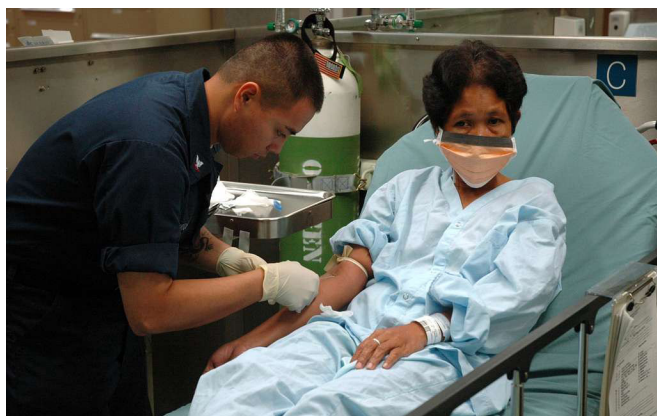


Although climate change is not expected to cause any sort of apocalyptic conditions in 2020, the wildfires in Australia have shown that it does in fact have that potential. Southern Australia's temperatures have risen 3 degrees in the past 70 years. Conditions are drier in that part of Australia as well thanks to the western Indian Ocean getting warmer and the eastern Indian Ocean cooling. All of this climate-change build-up helped spark those wildfires, and it has the potential to spark similar occurrences elsewhere. Also, looking beyond 2020, climate change could be our most realistic longer-term apocalyptic event.

What's worse is that the damage done to the planet may be irreversible. We've caused major climate changes to already happen, and more changes are expected in the future, according to researchers at NASA. NASA released a statement saying that if we stopped producing greenhouse gases today, global warming will continue to happen for decades, if not for centuries to come.

Consider the potential of climate change creating a hot zone in more ways than one. According to scientists, it presents a ticking timebomb in terms of a new pandemic. That's due to melting icecaps creating the opportunity for ancient, frozen viruses to thaw out and start looking for new hosts. Illnesses that haven't been seen on earth since the dawn of humankind could wipe us out. Some might even say this would be Mother Nature's retribution against all the harm humans have caused to the environment.

## 8. PANDEMIC



A pandemic is something that has the definite potential to occur with little to no warning. Although the best doctors and researchers in the world have done a mostly good job with eliminating and limiting the damage of diseases, there's always the potential for a new killer virus to run rampant through the human population. Massive deaths could begin shortly after symptoms initially surface or, more scarily, there may be no pre-death symptoms whatsoever. Instead, the illness and resulting deaths would just suddenly appear, leaving victims and medical researchers helpless to stop it.

Consider that the Black Plague killed around 150 million people in the middle of the 14th century. Before this scourge ended, it caused the death of roughly half of Europe's population. The Black

Death was a clear example of what happens during a pandemic outbreak, and it could happen today under the right conditions. Although our medical skills are better now, we also travel so much farther and in such quicker time frames nowadays. Therefore, a disease with a long incubation period could easily spread throughout the world before any symptoms are shown. In fact, there's always a possibility that it's happening right now.

And, at the time of this writing, a new threat is emerging from Wuhan, the capital of central China's Hubei province. Nicknamed the Black Death of Wuhan, and known formally as the Wuhan coronavirus, or 2019-nCov, has currently left 566 dead at the time of this writing, and over 28,000 infected in its wake. However, the scale of people infected could be more widespread and vastly underreported by China.

This particular strain of coronavirus has never been encountered before, and the infected suffer from debilitating pneumonia. Other coronaviruses encountered in human populations before includes severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle Eastern respiratory syndrome (MERS). What's scary is that these coronaviruses produce viral pneumonia; therefore, antibiotics will not work.

The fatalities resulting from the Wuhan coronavirus so far resulted from individuals that were already in poor health. Still, as the virus spreads, it is overwhelming healthcare facilities such as those in Wuhan.

One medical worker in Wuhan left a heartbreaking voice message describing how overwhelming the crises was quoted as saying,

“More than 100,000 infected. The government provides no medical supplies... People are dying in front of our eyes... We are on our own.”

John Hopkins University has created a real-time map that details information and statistics regarding the Wuhan coronavirus's spread.

The map is eerily reminiscent of made up ones encountered in science fiction and horror movies. You know the ones – they are the ones that bleed red as the red dots multiply and eventually cover all the land mass on the planet as the outbreak spreads in a doomsday scenario.

What is at the heart of climate change and pandemics can certainly be traced back to runaway population explosions. As the planet becomes more populated, the end result is oftentimes more pollution and better conditions for the spread of disease. And, whether you debate the fact that global warming is caused by a natural occurrence or the result of industry and pollution, or both even, the facts are irrefutable that we are changing the planet. And not for the better, either.



We'll cover black swans later, but some unforeseen black swan scenarios that we don't see coming related to an out of control population include carrying capacity and plummeting sperm counts in men. Both are designed to bring an exploding population into equilibrium.

By the way, we aren't going to include population growth as part of this disaster list, but rather as a prelude to some of the disasters mentioned in this text and others.

## MALTHUSIANISM AND CARRYING CAPACITY

Here's a sobering passage to chew on that directly relates to a slow march towards doomsday for us as a species when it comes to a burgeoning population. The Reverend Thomas Malthus posited the theory of Malthusianism or the idea that a population grows at an exponential rate, vs. resources such as water, food, space and energy that grow at a linear rate.

Here's what that means in a nutshell: the current population in 2019 is 7.7 billion, according to the United Nations. And that's growing at an exponential rate! We are also voraciously blowing through our resources like a swarm of locusts devouring a corn crop. Hell, there are even reports out that we'll quickly run out of sand. Look around you; that's one of the most plentiful resources on the planet, and it's widely used in the manufacturing of glass products.

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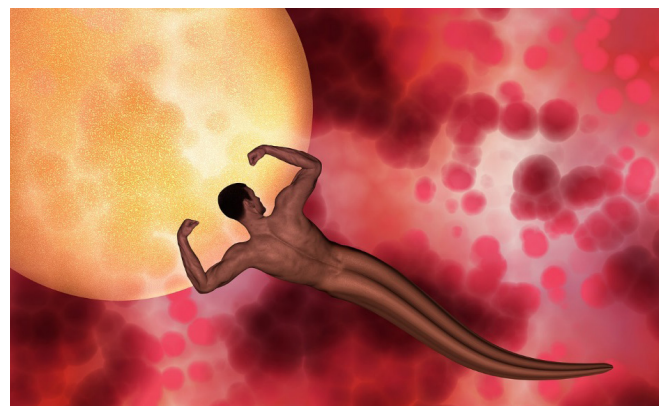
Reaching our population's carrying capacity has almost happened before, but the advent of technology saved us. There is even speculation now that regions have exceeded their carrying capacity. When this happens, the population declines.

In light of this, let's go back to number 2 on this list, which is about Iran-United States Tensions. Don't you kind of wish the world leaders discussed there and others would really put their heads together and work on real global issues?

Instead, they seem to meander around on policy and insult each other like schoolchildren. As we consume resources, it will soon become apparent that we need to look toward the stars for resources that can sustain us.

In the United States, Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson are leading private enterprises to travel to Mars. And, perhaps, if all the money and effort spent on conflict and mutually assured destruction were spent on space exploration, we might use those funds to find planets that can support life or provide many vital resources present and future generations will need. Meanwhile, the status quo exists now, while world leaders fiddle while Rome burns.

## LOWER SPERM COUNTS AND FERTILITY



If no one is prepared to stop runaway population explosion, Mother Nature might have a tailored solution to the problem in the way of lowered sperm counts in men. New research suggests -- at least in Europe and America -- that may be what's happening. And, although scientists disagree as to the how and why it's happening, they've reached a consensus that men in are experiencing a decrease in viable sperm.



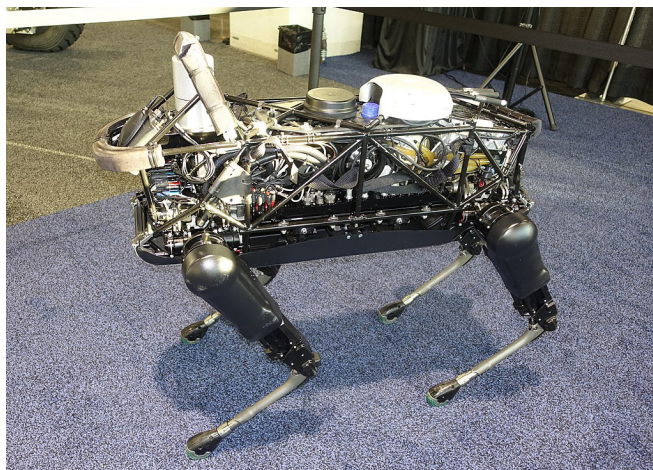
The study found that their little guys are having a harder time hitting their target, too.

Sperm counts have been falling since the 1940s, and they continue to decline, according to researchers. However, the lowered sperm counts weren't observed in New York during the study. Peter Schlegel, the president-elect of ASRM and a physician at New York's Weill Cornell Medical Center, had this to say about the results in the Big Apple,

“New Yorkers tend to be physically active and our water system provides some of the cleanest and highest-quality water in the U.S. We also have the best pizza.”

Good pizza's bearing on sperm counts hasn't been researched, but clean water is a telling factor since clean, drinkable water continues to diminish across the world. Plummeting fertility rates or complete lack of, takes care of the population problem predicted by Thomas Malthus. On the other hand, it creates a silent Apocalypse as the human race slowly dies out over a few generations.

## 9. CYBERGEDDON



So many of us have become completely dependent on technology. Most of us communicate through our cell phones, work at least partially through technological means, and, perhaps most importantly, much of our banking is done online, as well. Our electrical grids, water purification plants, and many other critical services are also connected to computers and are therefore vulnerable to attack. Should all of this technology go down as the result of something like cyber warfare, the resulting cybergeddon could result in a total economic collapse.

Also consider that if nearly all communication goes down for extended time periods, it would result in governments not being able to communicate effectively with their people and vice versa. This would most likely lead to a state of anarchy, at least until society transitions back into communicating solely through radios or similar methods.

The possibility of cybergeddon bringing our nation to its knees is high on the list of credible apocalyptic threats. After all, tensions between Iran and the United States may cause additional targeted cyberattacks. To date, Iran has already been accused of hacking three government websites. In 2016, the US indicated several Iranian hackers on charges of launching cyberattacks against dozens of US banking systems.

In the past, Iran has also made several claims about being able to hack US drones. This is a terrifying possibility, as it means they could take our military tech, make true 'metalheads,' and turn them against us. If you don't know what a metalhead is, you should check out the murderous robot dogs on the anthology sci-fi series, *Black Mirror*, that look disturbingly similar to the sophisticated and real robot canines that are manufactured by companies such as Boston Dynamics.

A whopping 85 percent of cybersecurity experts believe the US will face a wide variety of cyberattacks from Iran in the coming months. Targets are expected to include oil refineries and financial institutions. It's also believed that Iran is highly likely to attack via the 2020 election and social media. Iranian hackers may even be responsible for the worldwide search outage that hit Amazon in January 2020.

Some experts are warning that industrial control systems will become likely targets if tensions continue to escalate between the two nations. This would put critical US infrastructure at risk, including water systems and power grids.

## 10. BLACK SWAN

One last thing to consider as you make your way through 2020 is how unpredictable a possible apocalypse could be. This doesn't mean unpredictable as far as when one of the first nine scenarios on this

list occurs. This refers to unpredictable as far as what causes it. Maybe it'll be something that was deemed unrealistic by many such as a zombie apocalypse or an alien invasion. On the other hand, some robot that was created within the past couple of months will become an indestructible death machine; like indestructible to the level that it ultimately kills everybody or nearly everybody. However, if you can imagine it, it's not truly a black swan.



The biggest danger with these types of events is that them being so unexpected means that little or no thought or preparation ever went into determining what to do if they actually occur.

Here's something to ponder: Albert Einstein, the genius who developed the Theory of Relativity, and who also predicted the existence of black holes in the early 1900s, shared a few thoughts about ecological Armageddon. He said this before Colony Collapse Disorder and the beginning of the insect apocalypse that's happening today,

“If the bee disappeared off the face of the Earth, man would only have four years left to live.”

That's a telling statement and as prophetic in its own way as the prediction of black holes. What will we do as a species if there are no insects, especially beneficial ones such as honeybees and other pollinators? Conservationist warn that a mass die off of insects pose a risk to all life on earth. Yet, 400,000 insect species face extinction due to the heavy use of pesticides alone, not to mention other hazards to them such as parasites and the stress they receive from commercial farming of their honey.

**8** We can imagine the beginning, but even the great minds out there can only postulate the end result

of these tiny, slow-burning black swans. These catastrophes could cause us death by a thousand cuts should they occur.

## FINAL THOUGHTS



We may think that we do, but nobody truly knows what 2020 has in store for us or for the world. Perhaps an apocalypse will occur, causing those who have physically and mentally prepared for such a situation to then put that preparation into action. Maybe it'll be a relatively uneventful year.

Of course, the world is definitely going to end one day, either as we know it or permanently. The question is when will that occur and what will cause it? Will something happen in 2020 that provides the spark for an apocalyptic event to take place later this year or in the near future?

Seeing how likely the end of life as we know it is can be depressing if you think about it too much. However, we shouldn't stick our head in the sand or get too down about it. For the most part, we can't change the fact that the world could end any day, and it is similar to our lives having a beginning and end. Such things define the human race, and one of the things we can do is to make the most of our time while we have it. Especially, since we know that our planet needs a careful balance to maintain life for all living things.



## 6 BEST SIDEARMS FOR 2020

If there's one topic that never seems to get old, it is: Which handgun is the best for X scenario? And while there are more models out there than we could ever have time to shoot... and even more scenarios to possibly need them for, there's never a definitive answer. In our view, that's most certainly part of the fun.

When you set out to rate something as varied as today's handguns, you quickly realize you've simply got to lay down some ground rules. You know... in order to narrow down the scope a bit. This is why we've very intentionally chosen the term "sidearm" for this article, to imply a certain set of characteristics.

Yes, there are some very nice sub-compact pistols on the market today; and several are even fairly fun to shoot. However, because they tend to lack the ergonomic comfort and accuracy of their larger brethren, this class of weapon doesn't typically make the cut when it comes to "shooter's pistols." Likewise, many shooters are adopting "AR-pistols," which are technically considered pistols although they don't really meet the "holster test" in our book.

The class of handgun we're laser sight focused on for this article is the type of weapon you'd carry in a traditional belt holster, in your tactical vest, or in a tactical shoulder holster. Some of these might be sleek enough to serve as a concealed carry weapon, but that's not a requirement. This class most certainly

does include military service pistols such as the 1911, Beretta M9, and Sig M17.

### WHAT MAKES A GREAT SIDEARM



The classics still hold up in this category, because some things just never change. The way certain weapons feel and operate makes them stand out from the pack, despite the materials and finish used in their manufacture.

Key criteria for these weapons come down to a simple equation involving reliability, controls/operation, and bang for your buck. What we're looking for is a weapon that's a pleasure to shoot, confidence-inspiring, and makes you generally feel like a badass at the shooting range. And while everyone must inevitably hold and operate a firearm to know how it feels for them, we're here to help you narrow down the field. Let's drill down into some of the criteria we placed the most importance on in our search.

**RELIABILITY:** This is the most cut and dry criteria we looked at and, spoiler alert, this has become a much different conversation since technology entered what we often call the “Glock Age.”

Before the Glock, the typical semiautomatic was a very complicated animal indeed. But Glock changed the game in many ways, the same way John Browning’s designs did around the turn of the 20th Century. Nowadays, it can be a challenge to find popular handguns that don’t feature many of the designs popularized by Glock.

These striker-fired weapons are lighter in weight and generally function extremely reliably, even without proper maintenance. In fact, we can’t remember the last time we had a misfire or failure to feed when shooting a Glock, or even a Glock-inspired weapon. That’s not to say they’re all the same or equivalent.

The majority of the weapons on this list are among these Glock-inspired polymer guns. However, we’ve made sure to include some other high performing sidearms you might not be expecting as well. Striker-fired semiautos don’t have the market cornered on reliability, and certainly not accuracy or shooting enjoyment, which leads us too...



## SHOOTABILITY

This is a fun criterion to discuss, partly because it’s so subjective (hell, it’s even a made-up word). Yet, it’s also possibly the most important aspect of a weapon that you intend to train with. Every weapon has its own range of applications and limitations. Some designs are intended to stretch that range of applications, while others are intended to be ultra-capable within a certain range of uses.

**10** All of the weapons on this list succeed in living up to their intended performance at the shooting range.

They may not be the most lightweight option, nor the most compact. But they deliver a level of shooting performance that exceeds the shooter’s ability level.

That is to say, it’s highly unlikely that you would ever “outgrow” a model on this list from a skills perspective. They are exceptionally accurate, yet include a complementary mix of features/specs that really allow you to enjoy training with them.

By comparison, many smaller sub-compacts are hard to operate with larger hands/fingers. Lightweight handguns often recoil harder and increase shooter fatigue. A weapon that balances these factors well has the high shootability rating we’re looking for.

## BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

It’s our view here at the NSRA that paying for top-tier performance is fine, but usually unnecessary. We much prefer getting more than we paid for, which is a feeling you’ll likely get if you purchase any of these weapons.

That’s not to say we don’t appreciate a high-end Les Baer 1911, but you can certainly obtain a high-performing 1911 for well under \$1,000. There’s nothing particularly controversial about the concept that a \$3,000 Ed Brown features a sweet trigger, high-end finish, and is of a higher build quality than a lower priced weapon. But how much are those factors actually correlated with shooting performance?

In the end, it’s also possible that the more you have invested in a weapon, the more you want to baby and protect it. Thus, you may get significantly less work out of it.

The point is, if your goal is performance over presentation, or range time over display case time, then these weapons are right up your alley. They represent the highest ratio of performance to money spent, i.e. bang for your buck.

## ROCK ISLAND 1911 GI SERIES .45ACP

For those who love the way it feels to pump .45ACP rounds through a 1911, the sky is the limit when it comes to price. The nature of this classic design, since it is produced by so many different

manufacturers, is that each 1911 on the market is heavily specialized and surprisingly different. Some manufacturers focus on customizing every last detail at great expense for the discriminating collector.



Rock Island Armory, on the other hand, specializes in delivering surprisingly good values for surprisingly low prices. And while this bargain basement 1911 is not exactly a show stopper with rounded edges and tons of extra checkering that you might get for several times the price, you are getting a quality 1911 that is arguably just as reliable and accurate.

True to form, the no-frills GI Series is a lot better representation of the 1911 models actually carried by American soldiers. If the nostalgia of military service trips your trigger, this weapon is certainly in your wheelhouse.

The GI Series features a parkerized finished that is plenty functional in protecting your steel from the elements. The GI-Series comes with a standard six-groove barrel with a 1:16" twist, adjustable trigger, and a few subtle upgrades over the original Colt 1911s of old.

The no-frills sights on this weapon are capable of high-level accuracy. The trigger has some uptake, but we've found it to have a nice break, with a noticeable reset. With a thin front blade and black rear sights, it's not a particularly easy handgun to shoot fast. But that's a small thing you might modify with a little white paint.

Still, the GI-Series 1911 is a fantastic value that gives up nothing to get to its very reasonable price. It's a 1911 through and through, and it is perfectly worthy of competition level shooting.

## RUGER SECURITY 9



Each of these weapons stands out for being excellent shooter pistols as well as having a truly excellent bang for your buck value. But the Ruger Security 9 is perhaps the best example of that philosophy on this list.

Ruger has really done nice job with this weapon, giving it a very nice grip texture, great ergonomics, and a nice two-stage trigger. This is not a striker fired weapon, as you might expect. The Security 9 uses Ruger's Secure Action technology to deliver a really nice trigger feel that is nice and crisp, but basically indistinguishable from a nice striker pistol.

The 4-inch barrel delivers high-level accuracy, with an overall weight of 24oz. and a 15+1 capacity (which is average, not great, these days). The Security 9 does have a full Picatinny accessory rail, which is good for mounting lasers and lights like our Hellfire. The sights on this pistol have a Glock pattern to them, with a dovetailed front sight, very nice.

This semiauto definitely looks like a Ruger in the blockiness and chunky features, but one of the more aggressive looking designs they churned out as well. The Security 9 definitely takes some styling cues from the SR9 (also a great value handgun), but definitely one-ups its older brother in features.

There are front and rear serrations on the slide for tactical chamber checks. And there's also a little peep window on top of the chamber for added safety. The Security 9 also has a proper safety, but it doesn't interfere with operation should you want to ignore it. We also have to give the designers props for adding serrations on the front of the trigger guard.

Last but definitely not least, this very cutting-edge American made handgun is also the least expensive on our list. Yes, this weapon can be had for \$300 in most stores, possibly less if you find it on sale.

**Retail: \$300**

## **SMITH & WESSON M&P40 M2.0**



By all counts, the latest 2.0 upgrade on the already tremendously successful polymer handgun series will keep the M&P at the top of lists like this one for a long time to come.

Introduced in 2005, the first generation of the M&P 9mm was an excellent pistol in its own right and at an excellent value. Now in its second generation, Smith & Wesson answered the critics and took this weapon to an elite level.

Since we're already on the topic of 2.0 upgrades, let's discuss what's new. First off, once considered a weak point for the M&P, the new and improved trigger now gets a lot of praise. The break comes a little further back than it does on other pistols, but it's also very crisp. There's an audible reset to this trigger also. The grip has been improved as well, with a high friction stippling that really keeps this gun glued in place as you fire.

The M&P 2.0 is equipped with ambidextrous slide controls, reversible mag release, wavy serrations, and a loaded chamber indicator. Another nice touch on the M&P series that it's available in "flat dark earth" brown, if you're into that look.

The .40S&W version has a magazine capacity of 15+1 and comes with 2 very high-quality magazines (color matched if you go with brown). It also comes with 4 interchangeable back straps for fitment.

At the time of this writing, the price difference between the 1st and 2nd generation M&P is roughly \$50, while the value difference feels much wider than that. That said, there's really no reason to go with the 1st generation. Sights, holsters, and magazines for the 1.0 and 2.0 are interchangeable, FYI.

The M&P40 is a very nice pistol. The M&P40 M2.0 is an elite level pistol with tons of cool features we don't even get around to mentioning. Priced a bit lower than its Austrian (Glock) and Croatian (XDM) competitors, this American made pistol is an exceptional value.

**Retail: \$485**

## **TAURUS 627 TRACKER**



You probably didn't expect to see a wheel gun on this list. But in the interest of being thorough, as well as the fact that many of our readers love revolvers, we felt this class of sidearm must be represented and this model in particular.

When it comes to shooting tight groups and having a good time while doing so, it's hard to beat a good revolver. Unfortunately, most shooters' first experience with a revolver comes in the form of a snub-nose model built for protection and concealed carry. While many of those are excellent within their philosophy of use, they're not particularly accurate or fun to shoot.

Enter the medium/large frame revolver, such as the Taurus 627. This revolver's size, comfortable grip, and ported barrel make it a very smooth shooting weapon. The gas porting looks cool, but it's also functional in reducing recoil and specifically muzzle flip. With a 7-round cylinder chambered in .357 Mag, this revolver likes to throw its weight around; and by no means is it a lightweight (35 ounces). Speaking

of throwing weight around, the .357 Mag chambering allows for using .38spl ammo interchangeably which further reduces recoil.

This revolver gets a lot of praise for its trigger feel, which is very nice for a weapon in this price range. It's of course a double action/single action revolver, which means a good trigger should allow for proper "staging," meaning it has two clear stages (turning the cylinder, then dropping the hammer).

Why the Taurus, you ask? Not the very similar S&W 686 or the Ruger GP100? The answer is simple: cost. The 686 and GP100 are excellent revolvers and you won't find many shooters who don't prefer these over the Tracker. However, the Ruger is roughly \$300 more expensive, and the Smith & Wesson is \$350-400 more.

At \$400, the Taurus is just an incredibly good value for your money. If you can find it on sale, you can pick up a 627 Tracker for \$350. For a weapon this well-made and fun to shoot, that's a steal.

**Retail: \$400**

## **GLOCK 17 GEN 4**



If you're in the market for a modern handgun, you absolutely cannot avoid the comparisons with the Glock lineup. Why are these weapons the basis for all comparison? It's because Glock set the bar when it comes to polymer handguns, and quite a high bar at that.

The typical spiel when you talk to someone about these guns goes like this: If you're only going to own 1 firearm, buy a Glock. We don't disagree really, though we'd readily nominate a slew of other great handguns to the list for the same honorary "1 gun" award.

**13**

Either way, the respect for these Austrian made handguns is well earned. The quality, reliability, fit and finish you can expect from a Glock is pretty much second to none.

As you can tell, this isn't the most beautiful showpiece firearm imaginable; and it wasn't designed to be. In fact, the utilitarian look was a point of controversy when the first generation of Glocks started catching on.

But the Glock endured. The Glock 17 is now in its 5th generation, with the G5 coming in about \$125 more than the 4th generation. While there were nominal upgrades to the 5th generation, it's really hard to say that shooters would ever notice the differences in handling or performance over the 4th generation models. The gen 4 has a standard accessory rail (for tactical lights, laser sights, etc.), in addition to finger grooves on the grip.



The Glock 17 comes with 3 double stack magazines, each holding an ample 17 rounds for a 17+1 capacity. The magazine release is on the smaller side and may take a little getting used to. The 4.5" barrel is great for plinking, target shooting, or tactical shooting, as this platform is nice and steady in the hand.

As for operation and accuracy, most shooters find the 5.5lb trigger pull to be very intuitive. The 4th Gen Glocks have a great reputation for reliability and ease of use. As far as accuracy is concerned, as it is with most Glocks, the only limiting factor is the shooter.

**Retail: \$500**

## **CANIK TP9 SA**

If you're looking for a high-performance tactical handgun, one that rivals any of the household names (yeah, we're looking at you Glock and Springfield XD) at a ridiculously good price, the Canik TP9 SA should definitely be on your short list.



This weapon has been turning a lot of heads over the past few years, as it's been rapidly making believers out of dyed in the wool skeptics. Some may say that this Turkish-made gun simply can't be equivalent to an Austrian-made weapon, let alone one made right here in the USA. Then they spend some range time with the TP9 SA and change their tune.

This 9mm comes with excellent reliability, an 18+1 capacity, and military contractor grade quality control standards (ISO 9000). That ISO 9000 designation doesn't just affect the initial quality folks, this gun is known for holding up very well under heavy use. The sights are very nice, the grip provides plenty of friction, and the trigger is excellent. The trigger is crisp, with a great break and short reset.

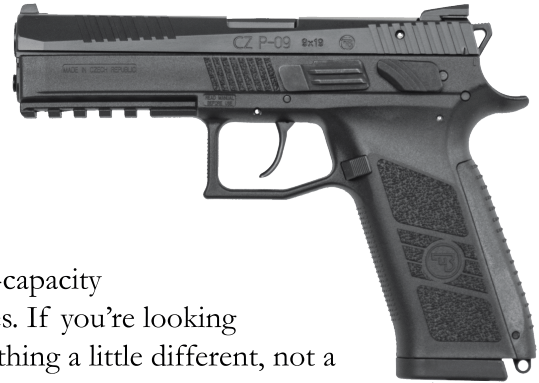
The original TP9 was a very popular pistol, the main complaint being its trigger was just really stiff. Then came the TP9 SA (for single action) and shut down nearly all negative murmurs regarding the trigger. For a striker fired handgun, the trigger is as good as any. That's high praise, in all honesty.

If you've considered a Walther P99, you might be especially interested in the TP9 SA, since Canik clearly took some design cues from the Walther (the de-cocking mechanism most notably). The fact is that this is a great shooter's gun with an excellent value for your money. The TP9 SA has been in circulation since 2015 and the durability/reliability ratings are high. The price is not.

**Retail: \$345**

## CZ P-09 – 9MM

You know us, we like 'em with some quirks and high-capacity magazines. If you're looking for something a little different, not a Glock, SIG, or XDM, this hammer operated, high-capacity sidearm might fit you just right.



This offering from CZ-USA to the polymer-frame duty pistol category has been turning heads since its release and for good reason. For starters, they really made a splash with a "suppressor ready" version, including a threaded barrel and elevated sights straight out of the box. Oh yeah, and many of those versions also have glow-in-the-dark night sights.

While the suppressor-ready package is an upgrade over the standard P-09, these "suppressor ready" models are available and constitute an excellent bargain when compared to aftermarket barrels and sights. The other heralded feature with the P-09 is a 19+1 round capacity. That's a lot of shooting on one magazine, folks.

The P-09 is not a featherweight gun, weighing in at 32oz and change, roughly the same as some popular SIGs like the P226. Also like the SIGs, it's a really good-looking weapon that really doesn't feel as heavy as it is (not that 2lbs is all that heavy).

As a hammer fired weapon, the P-09 offers hammer fans that beloved single-to-double action. The P-09 has a de-cocking mechanism for those who prefer to skip that long single-action pull. As you can see, this CZ has a big honking Picatinny rail for accessories.

Given that it's a fairly large, fairly heavy-duty pistol, why not load it up with lights and lasers, right? With the money you save by choosing this gun, you can probably afford some extra goodies.

**Retail: \$475**





## LASER SIGHTS AND HOME DEFENSE A CASE STUDY

By Oli Fischer

Home defense is a deeply personal topic. As any decision that involves life and death, your decisions regarding how to best secure your home and loved ones should be ones you've made carefully and consciously. It's far too important to be left to chance.

My goal with this article is to simply present you with the information you need to make the best possible decisions you can regarding this extremely important topic. If nothing else, I'm sure we can all agree on one thing; we'd all like to increase our own odds of walking away from a dangerous encounter. If this

**15** rings true for you, please read on.



### 24-YEAR-OLD GUN OWNER STOPS 2 HOME INVADERS WITH .22 PISTOL

Imagine this scenario: It's a typical Thursday morning and you're fast asleep in your apartment when there's a loud knock at your door. You slide out of bed groggily and answer the door to find a strange woman encouraging you to let her inside, of all things, because she claims to know "the people that lived there."

The problem is that, of course, you live there... and have for several years. You also know the residents of all adjacent units and most of their friends.

If the red flags haven't come out in your mind to this point, the sirens definitely start wailing when you excuse yourself to go get ready for work... and two strange men come out of hiding nearby and bum rush your front door, forcing it open just before you can turn the lock!

At this point, our hero, 24-year-old Daniel Williams, knew he was in the fight of his life as these assailants pushed him to the ground. It was at this point that Philip McIntyre stepped inside the apartment and began throwing punches at Williams as fellow assailant Robert Dellairo followed up, slashing at Williams with his knife.

Williams took several blows and a cut to his abdomen before he was able to run into his bedroom and grab his .22-caliber handgun, decked out with a laser sight. Although the weapon was intended for recreational shooting, by no means an ideal setup for self-defense, it proved to be more than enough to turn the tables on the attackers.



Gun in hand, Williams, “Did what I had to do,” hitting McIntyre in the leg and following the injured would-be burglars outside. That’s when Dellairo forgot something very crucial (that he’d brought a knife to a gun fight). At this point, he turned back to lunge at Williams, who naturally fired on the aggressor. This time, Williams struck Dellairo in the hip, a wound that would later prove to be fatal.

After this exchange, Dellairo and McIntyre fled to a blue Honda Accord waiting outside. Now in control of the situation, Williams followed outside and put two slugs into the trunk, in hopes that the marking would help police identify the vehicle.

Sure enough, police met the group of wounded home invaders at the local hospital shortly thereafter. Dellairo was transferred to Eastern Maine Medical Center that afternoon where he later died.

We’ve overheard some hyperbole over the years **16** regarding rimfire weapons for self-defense, some

going so far as to suggest you’d be better off with a bat than a .22-caliber firearm. Well, for anyone who downplays the lethality of the .22LR, here’s your evidence right here.

“They attacked me in my home, and I had to protect myself,” Williams told the Bangor Daily News. Luckily for Williams, he had the tools and the training to thwart these home invaders.

You see, although a rimfire caliber is not considered to be a good choice for home defense, the handgun did have an accessory that can make a huge difference in a close quarters scenario - a laser sight. In fact, we’ve come to highly recommend this particular accessory for home defense weapons.

The reason a laser sight is so valuable in a home defense or close quarters scenario is incredibly simple, yet not obvious to most gun owners. In fact, as much as we like red dot sights, there’s no comparison in this specific application.

With limited space to work with, or in a situation where an attacker is closing on you quickly, the chances are quite high that you won’t be able to extend your handgun up to your eye level as you do at the shooting range.

This is because you might be risking having your weapon taken from you, or it may be a simple issue of space. The bottom line is that you may have to shoot from an improvised position.

If you must shoot from a closed guard stance -- i.e. your weapon is anchored at your chest -- neither your iron sights, nor a red dot, will help you direct your aim. This is a situation where a laser is just about the only sighting aid that will help you line up your muzzle with your target.

Most people assume that a laser sight’s key function is for “aiming,” but that’s not the best description for the advantage a laser can provide. Target acquisition speed and the ability to improvise in a rapidly escalating situation are the biggest advantages that a laser will provide.

Consider Daniel’s story; he had to run back to his bedroom, get his weapon and direct his shots

effectively, even as he was being attacked. Chances are that Daniel had to confront these attackers as he moved through a doorway or at close range in a hallway. Again, these are situations in which extending to a traditional presentation (arms extended with the firearm at eye level) could be impossible, or worse, puts you at risk of having your weapon taken out of your hands.



With his laser equipped .22 pistol, Daniel was able to round corners and place his shots accurately, striking both home invaders during the confrontation. A key aspect in a confrontation such as this is striking a balance between speed and accuracy. To quote, Wyatt Earp, “Speed is fine, but accuracy is final.”

Of course, Wyatt Earp wasn't known to be a quick draw, nor did he have a 16-round magazine. Today's self-defense training experts drill to achieve both results, as did famous gunslingers in the “Wild West.” This is exactly why so many Military and SWAT experts utilize laser sights to gain the maximum advantage in a life or death scenario.

In a tactical shooting scenario, it's not all about grouping; it's about hitting your target reliably with the most shots in the shortest span of time. Laser sight technology has proven to be a game changer in firefights because it facilitates this goal so effectively.

## **WHY LASER SIGHTS ARE A MUST FOR HOME DEFENSE**

Home defense firearms come in all shapes and sizes, but no matter how well it seems to feel into your hand, everything changes in an indoor setting. Corners are tighter and distances seem shorter with a firearm in your hand. The ability to acquire a target

**17** and shoot quickly is critical.



Taking careful aim via a traditional stance, like you would at the gun range, may be a luxury you simply don't have (in both time and space). The speed with accuracy provided by your laser sight is your advantage over a home invader, even an armed one.

Plus, what about those who wear glasses and/or contact lenses? Lasers are even more important for those with poor eyesight. If you're startled awake in the night to an intruder breaking into your home, you may not have time to put on your glasses and grab your weapon.

Iron sights on most tactical weapons are black, maybe OD green, which means they're about useless in the dark. Add poor eyesight to that equation, and the poor night vision that is common for most of us as we get older, and you really don't have any effective way to aim in low light conditions.

Unless of course, you have a few rail-mounted accessories on your weapon.

Lastly, the edge is, of course, simply mental. You might call it the intimidation factor. When an adversary sees a laser dot flashing around the room, there's a mixture of distraction and fear.

At the very least, doubt creeps into the adversary's mind as they realize that they are outmatched and probably outgunned. This will lead to surrenders in many cases, or send them running. Thus, a laser could make the difference between a “shoot” and a “no-shoot” home defense scenario -- a “no-shoot” scenarios being vastly preferable.

At the very least, the sight of a laser dot bouncing around on the wall beside them will constitute a major distraction as they consider and reconsider the level of their adversary (you).

## PROVEN TACTICAL USES FOR LASER SIGHTS

In numerous engagements in caves or in house-to-house fighting, US special ops forces have demonstrated again and again that lasers do give their operators an edge.

Being able to place a visible dot on targets in all conditions equates to a massive increase in shot placement, especially in low-light conditions. Another major advantage for military and law enforcement is “painting” a target’s position, i.e. showing others where to direct fire.

CQC (close-quarters combat) is, of course, the most notable area where a laser truly “shines.” The reasons are several. First and foremost, the ability to shoot accurately from a non-traditional stance is a major advantage. The term “shoot from the hip” usually describes a hasty, ineffective method.

With a laser equipped weapon, you can shoot from the hip with a fairly high degree of accuracy.

Second, another factor that’s too often dismissed in tactical shooting circles is the idea that iron sights

are quite hard to see in low-light conditions, much less pitch-black conditions. We’ve heard from many highly capable shooters that good form and technique will overcome the fact that you can’t see your front sight. At best, this is a bit on the cocky side. At worst, it’s complete hogwash.

How well do you think you could shoot without seeing your sights? No matter what your confidence level is, you have to admit that not being able to clearly see your sights is a disadvantage.

We’ll leave you with this thought: With loads of adrenaline pumping through your veins, will you rise to the occasion -- or sink to the level of your training?

The fact is that it’s possible to sink lower than the level of your training when you’re under tremendous stress. Thus, any kind of “cheat” that increases your chances of striking the target is worth the effort. That’s why I’m such a strong proponent of these laser sights.





## **DIY Booze: Keep Warm with The NSRA's Homemade Fruit Brandy**

To emphasize the value of brewing/distilling/fermentation, we've launched a series of simple DIY recipes for the total beginner. These are easy, step-by-step operations designed for the folks who want to get their feet wet in the art of fermentation.

With a little success and confidence under your belt, you'll be ready to tackle larger more in-depth jobs, maybe even venturing into brewing and distilling as a full-blown hobby or more. As you have no doubt noticed, it's a hobby that's growing by leaps and bounds (pints and kegs, maybe?).

The flipside is, of course, that the demand for craft beer, liquor and wine seems to be insatiable. Thus, it's safe to say that while this knowledge is very useful in the here and now, it could invaluable in a SHTF-style "long emergency."



## Step by Step:

- Sterilize canning jars and allow them to cool.
- Put your fruit of choice in the canning jar up to the neck.
- Add sugar.
- Pour in vodka up to the neck of the jar.
- Put on the lid. Ensure the lid is very tight.
- Add a strip of tape to the top of the lid and write the date on it.
- Store on the counter – it's not necessary to store in a very dark or bright place.
- Flip the jar(s) daily for three months. After the fruit shrinks and begins floating in the liquid, it's okay to just give the jar a good shake every day.
- When the three months is up, strain out the fruit pieces through a colander.
- If you want the brandy to be even clearer, strain it once again through a coffee filter. Place the liquor in a bottle or jar that can be sealed. Enjoy!

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