



*Fausti DEA SL Lady Edition* ◀

*Syren Tempio Sporting* ◀



*Ithaca Model 37 Featherlight* ◀



*Blaser F3 Ladies Gun* ◀

## Perfect Fit

A new class of shotguns designed for female shooters

by IRWIN GREENSTEIN

THE NEXT TIME YOU'RE OUT SHOOTING a round of skeet or walking the clays course, have a look around. Chances are you'll see a lot more women taking aim. Just as more women have taken up golf, they're also getting actively involved in shotgun sports. But while the golf industry has been supplying clubs specifically sized for women, female shooters have mostly had to make do with shotguns built for their big-

ger male counterparts. That's changing.

In fact, 2014 might well be called the Year of the Woman's Shotgun, thanks to the introduction of a number of high-grade models designed with females in mind. Perazzi, Blaser, and a new venture called Syren have joined Fausti and Ithaca to deliver more quality ladies' shotguns than ever before. These guns forgo the honky-tonk, cupcake pink that sometimes characterizes other women's firearms for oil-finished walnut and fine engravings. More important, they're made to fit a woman's body. Though it's taken some time, shotgun makers are wising up to a growing market.

From 2001 to 2011, women's participation in the shooting sports and hunting grew by 52 percent and 42 percent, respectively, according to a survey by the National Sporting Goods Association. When it comes to shotguns, though, here's the rub. The guns at your neighborhood dealer fit a guy who stands five foot nine, weighs 165 pounds, and wears a size 40 regular with a

33-inch arm length. These off-the-shelf creations are just too big for most women. And when a woman's introduction to a shotgun comes by way of, say, a man's 12-gauge, he may not fully appreciate the thermodynamics of recoil, which can inflict bruises, both physical and psychological, that can turn someone off of shooting forever.

"Shooting a shotgun that fits well is like wearing a great pair of stilettos," says Elizabeth Lanier, a shotgun instructor based in Richmond, Virginia, and the founder of the group Girls Really Into Shooting—or GRITS, as they're fondly called. "If it feels good, looks good, gives you some confidence, and even makes you feel a wee bit sassy, you are probably going to feel more comfortable and more confident shooting it."

So what makes for a woman's shotgun? It relates to the five points where the body touches the gun: shoulder against recoil pad, cheek against stock, trigger hand on grip, trigger finger on trigger blade, and left

hand (for righties) on forend. When these contact points have the correct dimensions, the shotgun is comfortable to shoot, swings easily, has nominal recoil, and provides an unobstructed view down the barrel.

Of course, even a shotgun designed for a woman isn't exactly one size fits all. When you're trying out a gun, it's important that the recoil pad rests comfortably in the "pocket" between the shoulder and chest, so it doesn't jolt tender areas. The trigger blade should be easily reachable, and the forend slim enough to handily sit in the palm, as if you're carrying a carton of eggs. When these elements all come together, the difference is nothing short of extraordinary and can go a long way toward leveling the playing field.

"Making guns more tailored to a woman's needs and body configurations is a great start," Lanier says. "I simply cannot express the pure joy and excitement women feel when they realize that they can actually shoot, and generally shoot quite well." 🍷

## TAKING STOCK

The expanding variety of women's shotguns

**FAUSTI** The fabled Italian gunmaker, now run by three sisters, went haute couture with the DEA SL Lady Edition, a side-by-side. Turkish walnut, understated rose engraving, a filigree woman's head on the top lever (no joke), and a timeless profile make this gun at home on any Southern plantation or British shooting estate (from \$6,390; [faustiusa.com](http://faustiusa.com)). **SYREN** The brainchild of Caesar Guerini and its Italian parent, Fabarm, Syren introduced a family of shotguns for women for clays and field, offering five over-and-unders and one semiauto (from \$1,950; [syrenusa.com](http://syrenusa.com)). **ITHACA**

The Model 37 Featherlight with Ladies Stock is a pump designed for women. It's a rugged American classic well suited to clays or pheasant (\$999; [ithacagun.com](http://ithacagun.com)). **BLASER** The F3 Ladies Gun features barrel weights to help you find the exact balance, and an adjustable recoil pad that absorbs kick like a champ (\$7,995; [blaser-usa.com](http://blaser-usa.com)). **PERAZZI** (not shown) Crafted by a family-owned concern that makes shotguns for Olympians, Perazzis have a deserved reputation for precision and quality. The Ladies Sporter is, in a word, sublime (from \$11,536; [PerazziUSA.com](http://PerazziUSA.com), 626-334-1234). —I.G.