

Blockbuster's Model 18-20 FIREWOOD PROCESSOR

**Being in redwood country,
I mill a lot of big materials, but
diversity is critical to my success.**

Consequently, I've been cutting firewood for more than 15 years. Recently, though, firewood has become a much bigger piece of my business as owner/operator of True Cut Custom Milling near Eureka, California.

In 2011, I decided to expand my firewood business, so, after a great deal of consideration, I bought a Blockbuster 18-20 Firewood Processor. My goal was to increase productivity and expand my business so I could attract more clients.

Right after I got the Blockbuster, I tackled a job for

Humboldt Redwood Company. I was just getting to know the equipment, but still—with one guy moving logs using the log grapple on my John Deere 110—we processed 11 truckloads of firewood.

Humboldt Redwood had bucked the logs to 24-foot lengths and turned all the log butts the same direction. Their loader operator grabbed a bundle and set them next to our work site. Then, my tractor operator picked them up one at a time and loaded them on the Blockbuster's deck, setting five to seven logs at a time, depending on their size. From there, I chained

them into the 14-foot-long, chain-driven, infeed log trough. While I was processing, my partner manipulated any logs that had gotten hung up or needed to be turned around. With one person on the tractor and one in the operator's seat, we processed 110 cords in 78 hours, which worked out to 1.5 cords every 45 minutes.

I was hooked.

Standard Issue, American Made

I had shopped around extensively, comparing both price and features, before deciding on the Blockbuster 18-20. The 18-20 is a good entry-level machine, both for the size of logs I generally deal with and for the price.

Once the logs are loaded into the machine, the Blockbuster does everything. It chains them forward into the log trough, cuts them to length, drops them into another trough, pushes them up into an adjustable splitter head, and then drops the processed firewood down into a truck or trailer. Splitter cycle



From the operator's position, it's easy to handle all operations and see what's going on at every phase of the process.

time is about 6 seconds.

One reason I chose the Blockbuster is because it offered a chain saw bar instead of a circle blade. I prefer the chain saw bar because they're a lot less expensive and they're readily available. Some manufacturers say that their circle blades can cut 500 to 700 cords before they need to be sharpened. But that's probably in an ideal world. I don't know about you, but I don't work in an ideal world!

Generally speaking, logs have been dragged through the mud and have residual rocks and debris embedded in them. That will dull the teeth in a circular saw, and that's a lot of teeth to sharpen! If the Blockbuster 18-20's 24-inch, 80-gauge harvester bar chain gets dull, I can change it out in five minutes and get back to work. And if I need to replace the chain, it's not like I'm looking for something exotic from a specialty vendor. The stuff is American made and standard. I live in sawmill country and we have a mill supply store in town. I can just walk in, ask for a chain or bar, and they usually have it in stock. The same holds true for bearings or other parts: they're standard issue. If I break a link in the infeed chain, I can almost always replace it the same day. That's really important when it comes to standard wear items. If you run 10 big logs through a machine, stuff is going to happen. It's nice to know that won't put you on the sideline while you wait for parts.

Splitter Heads and Specs

I also liked the Blockbuster 18-20's capacity. It's rated for an 18-inch-diameter log. And, though it's a bit tight, I've processed plenty of 20-inch diameters. Though the specs for length are 20 foot, I have processed many 24 footers as well. I also had Blockbuster extend my infeed table from 5 feet to 8 to increase my log capacity. That way I don't have to get off the machine and reload as often. I can run eight logs through in

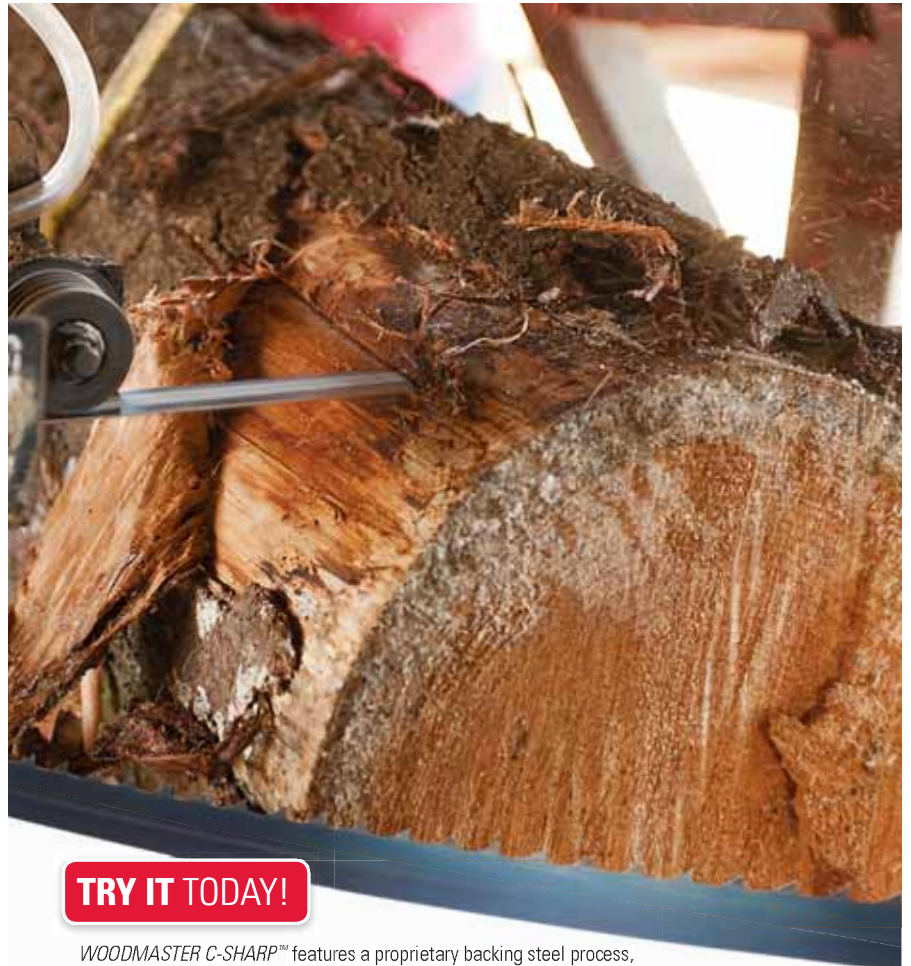
about 20 to 30 minutes.

The 18-20 comes standard with an adjustable 4- to 8-way splitting head. After operating the machine for a year, I've learned that for some logs, the 8-way splitter is too big. There's a time and place for the 8-way, but I would recommend having the 4-way as an option. The good news is it's super easy to swap out splitter heads. You simply pull a hoop off the top of the splitter head



If the harvester bar chain gets dull, it can be removed for sharpening or replacement in about five minutes.

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Blockbuster Model 18-20

DIMENSIONS

Width for storage and transport	6 ft. 6 in.
Width when operating	8 ft. 6 in.
Height	7 ft.
Length	25 ft.
Weight	5,900 lbs.
Maximum log length	20 ft.
Maximum log diameter	20 in.
Cutting lengths	12 in. to 22 in.
Adjustable splitting head	4- or 6-way
Splitter opening	25 in.
Splitting cylinder	4 in.
Hydraulic saw	18 hp, 25 in. Harvester bar and chain
Infeed deck	14 ft., chain-driven log trough
Splitter cycle time	6 sec.
Production	approx. 2 cords per hour (128 cubic ft.)
Price	\$37,900
Options	larger frame; 3 strand, 8 in. infeed deck; 8-way wedge; operator's roof; all-weather operator's cab with heat, lights, fan, AVC, operator's lights; auto stop.

and slide it out, and then you slide in a different head and put it back in place.

With multiple splitter heads to choose from, I can roll up to a job, take a look at the logs, and decide which splitter head would be best. In 15 minutes, I can swap in the right head.

Having a second splitter head is an added cost, but I think it's worth it. Most of the splitter heads are adjustable vertically, so you can figure out what your log-to-splitter-head ratio is and choose a splitter accordingly.

Transportation and Maintenance

At less than 6,000 pounds, the 18-20 is a breeze to transport. It tows easily behind my one-ton Ford and I've seen other people tow it behind a half-ton Dodge. Once you arrive on site, setup is a snap. You unhook it from the tow vehicle and put it where you want it on the work site. The machine comes standard with three legs. One is mounted on each side of the machine at the front of the infeed table. I place an extra foot under the infeed table by the operator's station for added support.

Before you set up the machine, you want to make sure it's level. If you've purchased the optional conveyor, bring the conveyor under the discharge and hook it up to the pintle connection on the processor. I purchased a radial stacker-type conveyor, so I actually jack up the conveyor and then turn the wheels to 90 degrees. That way, I can physically push the conveyor side to side if the pile gets too high.

The unit is super easy to run. It has six individual levers that operate the different aspects of the machine. One lever raises and lowers the splitter head, one raises and lowers the conveyor, another controls the infeed table, one controls the infeed to the sawbar, another runs the clamp and sawbar, and the splitter lever operates the splitter intake. From the operator's seat,

MANUFACTURER

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tel: 888/775-4883, www.blockbuster-inc.com



At 5,900 pounds, the 18-20 is easy to tow with a full-size pickup.

it's easy to manipulate all six levers and still see what's going on at every phase of the process.

Maintenance is pretty standard. The 18-20 has a 44-hp turbocharged Kubota diesel motor with a 25-gallon tank. I did the first service on it at 50 hours and then approximately every 250 hours after that. And then, of course, the chains need regular sharpening. The automatic transmission fluid serves multiple purposes: lubricating the blade, the clamp, and the splitter, so the ATF reservoir is

right by the operator's seat and it's easy to keep an eye on it.

One thing about the 18-20 is that, to operate the cutter head, you have to be running at full rpm, which is a nice safety feature. You've got to be paying attention to what you're doing while the machine is at full rpm. There's a lot of stuff going on; there's sawdust and debris. A window at the operator's station can open and close as needed, and, for added safety and comfort, I opted for a roof over the top of the station.



Splitter cycle time is 6 seconds and swapping splitter heads takes about 15 minutes.

Still, there's a lot of stuff flying when processing, so I wear ear and eye protection and, of course, chain saw chaps, because I never know when I might have to jump out and cut a sweeping log.

Repeat Customer!

Service from Blockbuster has been great. Dave and Tim have gone out of their way to be helpful. In fact, I've been so happy with the compa-

ny that I've decided to upgrade to their 22-20. The main reason I'm moving to this unit is to reduce the amount of physical handling involved. The 22-20 should do that. It comes with a table that supports the tail end of the log. With a lever, I can lift the table and it will support that short piece of log while the saw is cutting it. When you drop the table the log rolls down. With the 18-20, I have to physically hang on to that end piece of the log or have someone else on the job to do it for me.

The 22-20 also has a hydraulic stop, which is really cool. You run your log right up to this hydraulic stop. With the 18-20, there's a wooden rod, and I have to eyeball it. That's not a problem for an experienced operator, but I want to take as much guesswork out of the process as possible. The 18-20 is rated at 2 cords an hour, or one log truckload per day. The 22-20 will do up to 3 cords per hour. It has a

68-hp Kubota diesel. For transportation, it's 3 feet wider and the height is the same.

Getting My Money's Worth

This spring, I was fully engaged in firewood processing. In April, I bought 12 log truckloads of madrone. I brought them to my yard and hired two guys to cut all week using the 18-20. It didn't take any time at all to train them and they cut about 30 cords.

The Blockbuster has proven to be a reliable unit with all the features I could ask for. ■

The daughter of Italian immigrants, Gia Carrozzi is the fourth generation of her family to work with wood. For the past 15 years, she has operated True Cut Custom Milling in northern California, specializing in vertical-grain lumber, wide slabs, and long beams—primarily cut from old-growth redwood.

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