



Inventory. Ours & Yours. How much bamboo should be kept on hand? The truth is, we'll have less on hand, considering the scale of our operation, than we will suggest you keep on hand. Our intentional goal for this first year (i.e., the bamboo brought in from the 2016 harvest) is to sell out almost completely. We'll reserve small portions of the two loads for our two events (Pandamonium in the spring and The Bash in the fall), and we may set a small portion from each load aside to age in our second warehouse. However, we're not going to have a truly viable level of inventory until we receive all the projected loads from the 2017 harvest. Our entry into the bamboo importing business was calculated to test the water. If the water is good, we'll earn a paycheck, we'll pay back our investors, and we'll have enough left over to fund our imports from this year's harvest. We anticipate good things and we already plan to import at least twice as much bamboo from the 2017 harvest. However, at least one load from the 2017 harvest will go entirely into our reserve inventory and it will begin aging in our second warehouse.

And how much should you inventory? That depends on your goals. If you want to age your own bamboo, and you think you'd enjoy being able to select a culm from your own stash some Saturday morning when the urge to split out a culm strikes you, then you need to start a collection. Purchase a few more culms than you anticipate using this spring and summer and store it well. It's like cellaring your own wine, whether bought by the bottle or by the case. Having two or three years' worth of bamboo stowed in your own shop allows you to have full control over the storage conditions – primarily temperature and humidity. Having more bamboo than you need for a given year also gives you protection from the vagaries of the harvest, import restrictions, and all the variables that we'll be hedging against as we develop our own excess inventory over the next few years. Having a small collection of "excess" bamboo also allows you, as the maker, more flexibility in selecting the right culm from your collection to complement the next rod taper you plan on crafting. On one hand, an avid professional might say you can't have too much bamboo. On the other hand, there are limits...the harvest of top quality bamboo is limited; space is limited; expense is a limit. So, how much is enough? I think a prudent rodmaker will

have at least two or three years' worth of culms on hand, improving with age. I think a professional hedging his inventory against fluctuations in the market will have at least five years' worth of bamboo stacked up because you shouldn't trust the supply of the basic raw material on which your livelihood depends to blind fate (remember, fortune favors the prepared). Realistically, for a hobby maker who crafts one rod each winter, three culms is plenty. For a gal making three to five rods per year, ten culms on hand is a very good start. For a pro going through three bales per year, one hundred and fifty culms is a reasonable shop inventory. Then, once you have your basic inventory on your racks, you only need to add culms to replace what you actually used up the previous year, or to round out your collection if particular culms crop up that are of interest, e.g., large diameter culms, culms with long internodal spacing, particularly blonde culms, etc. By 2018 we'll be helping the discerning maker by offering finer and finer gradations of bamboo...not just "A" or "A+" culms, but an A Grade culm from the third load of the 2017 harvest, selected especially for its long internodal spans and nearly flawless straw coloration. Each year we'll continue to redefine the concept of Peak Bamboo.

Worth noting, is that this 'inventory' suggestion is not a hardcore sales pitch aimed to get you to overstock. It's sound advice. We all know supply goes up and down as suppliers enter or leave the marketplace. We all know supply is variable in terms of quality. There are good loads and there are loads that aren't. And we've all heard of those dark ages when there was a trade embargo – that's not something I'm predicting and it would be tough for us to weather with so little bamboo stateside, but it remains on the horizon of our consciousness as a worst case scenario. Prepare for the worst, hope for the best. But prep doesn't mean overbuying – that's why you need to rationally plan for your average production into the foreseeable future, not your pie in the sky plans to make sixty rods a year by your lonesome. Further, as you buy, buy with the intent to sample various loads – and various suppliers. When you discover a load that is especially suitable for your type of rodmaking, buy a little extra, but not too much extra, because the next load might be even better, or at least better suited to your eye, your rodmaking style.

