

## (Sporting Classics 2006)

Every year I ask the directors of Spanish shotgun maker Aguirre y Arranzabal, better known as AyA, "what's new" for this year. And, every year the answer is the same. "Nothing." This violates the mantra of modern marketing, which says that a shotgun company must introduce something "new" every year--no matter how contrived or unnecessary--to titillate the consumer and keep their name in the news.

Indeed, it has been several years since AyA has tinkered with their highly successful line of superb side-by-sides. After all, they have been making shotguns since 1915. And have sold over 600,000 of their creations. Many years back, after the legendary British doubles assumed price tags requiring a second mortgage, AyA hit upon a very simple, yet profound idea: why not build beautifully crafted, hand-fitted custom shotguns that retain the elegance, balance and classic styling of British side-by-sides, add in exceptional reliability and quality, and offer them at a reasonable price?

This is an idea that is easier said than done, and it took several decades for AyA to move from concept to reality. As proof of their success, tens of thousands of AyAs have been sold in Britain, the hallowed ground of the side-by-side. The AyA No. 2 (MSRP \$4399) remains one of the top sellers in the U.K.

All AyA models can be ordered exactly to the customer's specifications, and customized as he or she sees fit. But if you're looking for something "new," which is rather incongruous, anyway, relative to a classic firearm, you'll have to look somewhere else.

Ask the management of AyA "what's new," and they will smile and shrug their shoulders. "We cannot make our shotguns better," they answer. "How then could we make them new?"