Unusual doesn’t always equal fake. This “golden” TiN-coated Venom blade was made on order by Extrema Ratio for a Russian customer. The wooden hilt seen at the bottom of the picture is genuine too.

BEWARE OF IMITATIONS!

It’s true of any quality product: sooner or later, somebody will make copies of it. Such fakes cause considerable harm to “Made in Italy” and to the Italian economy. Food and fashion were first to be affected, with so many other great products to follow, including Extrema Ratio knives.

by Roberto Allara (translated by Raffaele Manzo)

“Beware of imitations”, used to read the cover text of a well-known Italian puzzle magazine, as attempts at copying it abounded. Later they changed that line to: “Proud to be the magazine many try to imitate”. They tried because the original was such a fine periodical, and those imitators wished to take advantage of its well-deserved fame. That is, it’s always the top quality products they make fakes of – roughly similar items of considerably cheaper manufacture – and never the other way around. You’ll find inferior Chinese copies of Western products, but never a Western copy of some Chinese crap. Even when such fakes are actually of passable quality, unacceptable cost-cutting is still involved in their making. Fake apparel, for example, is not necessarily
The smaller knife is pure invention, but they’re trying to sell it for an Extrema Ratio design. Note the shape of the depression on the handle: it’s hugely different from any of the genuine items made in Prato.

Fakes have a fake serial number – which is, in fact, the same on all individual knives.

of worse quality than the genuine thing: think of some famous, pricey fashion designer having a handbag manufactured in Vietnam, then adding a few finishing touches to it in order to justify a “Made in Italy” label. Most likely, the Vietnamese manufacturer makes five to ten times as many pieces as requested, with the excess going to those summertime Senegalese peddlers who put up shop on our beaches by lying towels on the ground. Apart from the label (false no matter how exact a copy), the fake handbag can’t really be told from the genuine one. Still, the differences – though not always worth the price tag – are there: after accounting for the distribution chain, a fashion designer’s markup
The existing fakes of Extrema Ratio knives fit into three broad types: faithful copies, altered copies or items merely “inspired by” the originals. Faithful copies simulate original items, but differ from them in a few details. An altered one is similar to an existing item, but exhibits significant differences, including cosmetic ones. “Inspired by” knives sport fake Extrema Ratio logos and draw from the brand’s distinctive aesthetics, but don’t really resemble any one of their products – these wouldn’t be “copies” at all, really, if only they weren’t blatantly derivative from the Italian brand.

With all these fakes – but for one exception I’ll point out – first thing to meet the eye is their packaging. Except for those models supplied in a special case of their own (such as the Ultramarine or the 39-09), all Extrema Ratio knives are packaged in rigid boxes made of thick and sturdy, non-foldable cardboard covered in black paper, with the logo hot-stamped on a silvery film which is then made adhere to the box. Knives in the Desert Warfare series are instead supplied in a beige box with a black logo, otherwise identical to the above.

This is an expensive packaging solution, as the boxes take up significant extra
The genuine box is thick, non-folding cardboard, while the fake one is thin, folding paperboard. There's also a knife-shaped padding inside the genuine box.

Some of the fakes are convincing indeed, but can be spotted by a minor detail. Here the telltale is the inscription MADEINITALY written without spaces.

A Chinese maker was shamelessly displaying this fake Extrema Ratio at their booth in IWA 2011 in Nurnberg.
Left-hand: genuine Extrema Ratio. Right-hand: two fakes. The tang in the fake is welded instead of one with the blade, and the wire-cutter hole is fashioned after the Russian design.

Extrema Ratio product was ever issued in such a bag. The makers of fake knives aren’t Italian and, sometimes, are utterly unfamiliar with the Latin alphabet. In reproducing the inscriptions “Extrema Ratio” and “Made in Italy”, they often make mistakes in spelling or spacing. Sometimes, the writing is reversed or mirrored. Fake “serial numbers”, of course, are usually repeated identically over a whole batch of knives.

The blade sharpener on the back of the fake’s sheath is mere cloth-backed sandpaper, rather than diamond-plate as in the original.
Had these knives been made in Prato, we'd be looking at some exciting collector items: prototypes for designs which never went into production. But these inventive fakes were never seen in Prato before the company acquired them as research documents.

The groove on a genuine blade has rounded edges. The one on the fake, cut with a common milling machine, looks crude in comparison.

But that’s enough words: I’ll let pictures speak, now, as they’re much more eloquent and reliable. Originals and fakes could be compared by rigorous testing, stressing both to the point of breaking, but why do this to a fine, genuine Extrema Ratio knife? No, these photos are all you need to tell a fake from an original.

In defense of genuine “Made in Italy”: the Italian Guardia di Finanza confiscating fake Extrema Ratio products.