JENNIFER LIEB

Barbecue fun wherever you are

An idea that originated at a festival has turned into a new line of business: WWS Metallformen works with FENNEK to build portable stainless-steel barbecues and fire pits – manufactured with industrial precision on TRUMPF machines.

Managing Director Christian Weigel is immediately inspired when an employee from the WWS laser department approaches him with the idea of building a portable barbecue. The employee needs it for a festival, but Weigel sees even more potential. As a recreational angler, he could really use a barbecue like that. It would have to be compact. Lightweight. Easy to transport. High-quality, yet pared back to the essentials. A brainwave becomes a tangible idea. And that idea becomes a product: the FENNEK Grill.

"Our team was immediately thrilled at the idea," says Jakob Haag, head of marketing at WWS Metallformen. "After all, we had the necessary machines on-site." The team designed, tested, and ultimately manufactured the product – and the company's first portable barbecue was well received. First with coworkers, then with customers. Today, FENNEK is a brand of its own under WWS Metallformen. The product portfolio includes portable and fixed barbecues, fire pits, portable stoves, and accessories.

Jakob Haag, Head of Marketing at WWS Metallformen, is delighted with the success of the FENNEK brand. As well as portable barbecues, FENNEK now also offers other products including elegantly designed fire bowls.

Using an exciting idea, WWS Metallformen has established a second line of business with the FENNEK brand.

Small, compact, lightweight, and easy to set up: FENNEK Grills are the perfect companions for all outdoor enthusiasts.

Automotive meets adventure

WWS Metallformen, a family-owned company, is based in Hatzenbühl in the southern Palatinate and typically manufactures products for high-end industrial customers. "In addition to the automotive industry – including commercial vehicles and motorcycles – we also supply sectors such as the aerospace industry and the agricultural and construction equipment markets," says Haag. WWS develops and manufactures prototypes, production parts, assemblies, fixtures and tools for these customers. The experience from this world is now incorporated into every FENNEK product.

After all, a barbecue that's meant to work on the go won't tolerate any sub-standard components. The parts must be lightweight, able to be stored flat, and fit together neatly during assembly. "At FENNEK, we design the parts ourselves," explains Haag. FENNEK uses WWS's infrastructure for manufacturing. "Our production is integrated into the production process wherever it fits in terms of timing and workflow. Our industrial customers with fixed delivery dates remain our top priority."

WWS relies on TRUMPF machines for its production. The company cuts the barbecue on a TruLaser Cell 7040 3D laser cutting machine and bends them on a TruBend 5085 bending machine. "After cutting, the parts are sanded, then folded, assembled, packaged and shipped to the customer," explains Haag.

FENNEK's barbecues and fire bowls, which are made primarily of stainless steel, are precision-manufactured on the TruLaser Cell 7040 laser cutting machine.

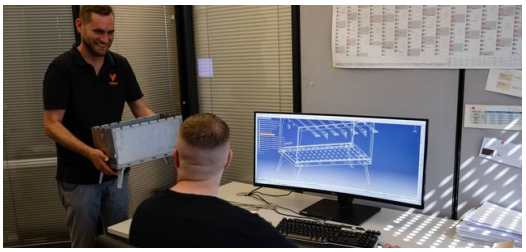
Using the TruLaser Cell 7040 3D laser cutting system, WWS Metallformen cuts complex parts for industrial customers across a wide range of industries. But FENNEK also benefits from the machine's flexibility: it cuts components for barbecues ranging from two to eight millimetres in thickness.

The single parts of the FENNEK barbecues can be assembled without tools using slots and interlocking tabs. This also requires precision during the bending process. The TRUMPF TruBend 5085 delivers clean bends.

Compact, yet high-quality

The FENNEK Grill – the original barbecue – consists of just a few stainless steel parts and an aluminium case. The idea behind it is a compact pack size, few components and simple assembly. The single parts can be connected using slots and tabs. "We try to make everything so it can be assembled without tools. I mean, you don't necessarily have a wrench with you on a picnic or camping trip," says Haag. "For technical reasons, we also have to switch to rivets or screw connections for some models," he goes on to explain. "But that tends to apply more to products that you wouldn't just casually carry under your arm anyway."

As well as assembly, the material plays a key role, particularly when it comes to compact barbecues and fire pits. "90% of our barbecues and accessories are made of stainless steel," says Haag. Stainless steel is sturdy, easy to maintain, and durable. For its portable products, WWS typically processes thin sheet metal with a thickness of one to two millimetres. Larger fire plates, on the other hand, can be six to eight millimetres thick. "Above all, we benefit from the flexibility of the TruLaser Cell 7040. For example, we can easily process all sheet thicknesses on the same machine," explains Haag. "At the same time, we can switch between cutting, welding, and laser metal deposition in no time at all. This means that the production of our barbecues fits seamlessly into WWS's regular production processes."



WWS Metallformen has experience in the design and manufacture of production parts, assemblies, fixtures, and tools for the automotive and aerospace industries, as well as for agricultural and construction machinery. Of course, FENNEK designs all of its products in-house too.

From design and manufacturing to shipping: For FENNEK, quality is a matter of course.

Perfectly matching accessories, such as bags and cases, make it easier to transport the barbecues.

A second source of income

The barbecues have evolved from a side project into a major pillar of WWS's business. "FENNEK now has many satisfied customers," Haag explains proudly, adding, "Our main advantage is that we handle production right here on-site. This allows us to keep an eye on quality at all times and make adjustments at short notice."

When Christian Weigel goes fishing today, he doesn't just enjoy the relaxing wait for that tug on the line. He's just as excited about the smell and taste of freshly grilled fish. And about a barbecue that shows what happens when a good idea, industrial expertise, and precision sheet metal processing come together to create a product to use on the go.

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https://www.trumpf.com/en_GB/newsroom/stories/barbecue-fun-wherever-you-are/