



Queen Cutlery Guide

Swing Guard Knives from Schatt and Morgan, Queen City, and Queen Cutlery, Titusville, PA

Dan Lago, with acknowledgements to Frederick Fisher and David Clark

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Introduction

To define the swing guard pocket knife, I mean a folding knife that locks the blade when open, and has small metal bars (the "swing guard") attached to the tang on either side of the blade with one thru-pin. As the blade opens, the guards swing down to lock against the handle and provide some protection for the user's hand.

The purpose of this project is to compile some overview information about swing guard knives generally, and to begin listing Queen's production history of this pattern:

- a.) Schatt & Morgan, Queen City, and Queen Cutlery's production from 1903 until 1991, through catalog records;
- b.) Queen Cutlery estimated production of variation in the swing guard pattern between 1992 and the close of business at the end of 2017.

Historical perspective.

Several internet sources claim folding knives were heavily in use by the Romans by 500 BC and some surviving models were swing guards and highly decorated. One account gives Spaniards credit for popularizing a folding lock back knife in the 1400s. Neil Punchard (2017) states, “hand guards have been used on knives and swords since about the beginning of cutlery for an essential purpose, to protect the hand.” He reports that the first swing guard knives are not known, but they clearly existed by the early to middle 1800s. Clearly, fixed blades were easier to make and could be made bigger and stronger for heavy work in everyday life. Even today, they would be the most common form of knife. Still, the guard would have been valuable in a small knife, able to be carried very discreetly, but suitable for relatively heavy use. The guard provides a critical margin of safety for the hand as tasks get heavier, such as butchering, or any task where the handle might get slippery and the hand could slide out onto the blade, including defensive use in fights.

It also makes sense that the swing guard would have been an early elaboration of basic folding knives, recalling the guard on both daggers and hunting knives. Several commentators think the dagger-like shape of the narrow spear point blade common in many swing guard knives recalls an Italian and or Spanish - a Mediterranean ancestry of these knives. Methods of forging knife steels were available after about 1740 (See Dewey Ferguson’s delightful short history of folding knives, 1970). Mr. Punchard (2017) and I are in agreement, the swing guard knife had to be in the repertoire of major knife-making centers such as Solingen Germany, and Sheffield England, and all across Europe, well before the 1850s, when skilled workman from these centers helped populate the American knife industries through the latter half of the 19th century. Schatt & Morgan participated in that market, and their products provide the foundation for all current Queen Cutlery swing guard knives, as shown below.

Swing Guard Knives and Social History

It is clear that early in the 20th century, Case called its swing guard "The Switchblade," after the Italian stiletto being carried by many immigrants. But American sentiment drifted away from the swing guard as its identity got wrapped up in “stiletto,” and association with organized crime and youthful gang violence (see for example:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stiletto>). Many laws were enacted to reduce access to automatic knives in the 1950s, culminating in the U.S. Switchblade law of 1958.

Queen's experience with the original model #25 Jet was like other companies - inventory had to be destroyed. Big lock back folding knives became a small market for several decades, until the approximately the early 1980's (Think of Queen's Hawk Series and Rawhide Series). And finally, in the early 1990's, Queen Cutlery brought back the swing guard, after searching for early Schatt & Morgan patterns that been out of production. In keeping with history, they focused on clip point blade in the first issues.

While we see that the spear blade was offered as early as 1907, its social meaning with the guard had changed in the public eye, and knife makers responded. The spear blade was re-introduced in 1994 in only the premium Schatt & Morgan Annual Series. Beginning around 2001, a number of factory special orders (SFO) signaled interest in the spear blade. In 2013, the spear blade was back on a cataloged swing guard – the olive drab linen micarta (1LLM), perhaps the most “military-looking” Queen swing guard. It has been a recent theme in the group of Queen Special Projects (QSP 13 – 20). The traditional “Hunter” is undergoing a transformation toward “urban personal defense.” Again, the buying public is offered more choices.

These knives will probably remain less than best sellers. Installing a guard means several extra parts and steps in making a knife, and the fit of components must be precise or the guard will wobble and not function well. Producing a swing guard takes a bit more time and requires a bit more skill of the maker. So, swing guards, already a large knife, are therefore often a bit more expensive than making a folding knife without a guard. Even in the modern era, some might be still be concerned that the size and prominent guard might cause the knife to be seen as "too aggressive" for politically correct social settings. For some, the folded guard may be seen as increasing risk of snagging the knife when pulling the knife from a pocket if in a hurry, or damage pockets, or interferes with an accustomed grip, or too big and heavy, and so on. The point is - These knives are not, and have not been, for everyone, for a long time.

Thus, while many, many swing guard knives have been made, the number shrinks to a tiny percentage in comparison to the overall production of other folding knife patterns. Historical, highly functional, often graceful and decorated, relatively uncommon among knives – these are all considerations making swing guards a highly collectible knife.

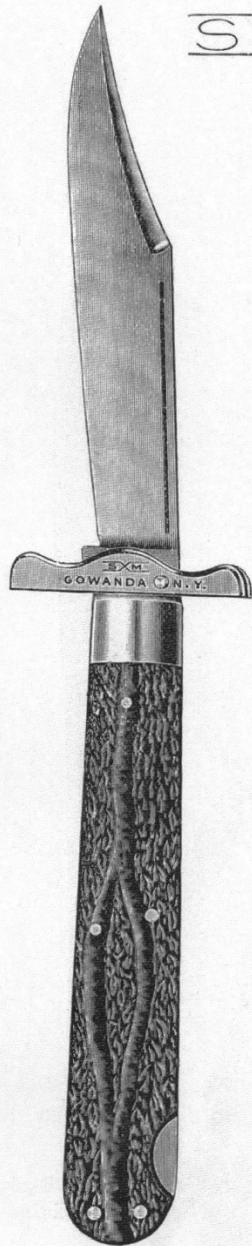
Schatt & Morgan Production of Swing Guards

David Clark's (2010) exact reproductions of the Schatt and Morgan catalogs for 1903 and 1907 provide a bedrock summary. In 1903, (figure 1, page 29) two folding lock back patterns were offered - #116 with a swing guard, and #106 without a guard. In the 1907 catalog (figure 2, page 90), the number of lock back knives has increased to four. The plain lock back knife, #106, now has grown - version #107 with a shield and polish, and #109 with a spear blade. A version of the #106 with a compass in the handle (#10, shown on page 91) is also listed as “discontinued.” The steel liners used in the versions of the #106, 107, 109, would make this a very heavy duty knife.

The #116 swing guard lock back also still offered in 1907. Note that the earliest swing guard (1903) has a curved shape, and by 1907, this has already been replaced by a gradual rounded top for the guard. The clip blade is offered on four of five different models, reflecting the hunting heritage of the knife. They are clearly offered in both catalogs as “Hunting Knives.”

Of course, the company may have made other lock back knives. They may have made other changes in over 30 years of production of its swing guard, but that is another story. These few catalog knives provide the patterns and dies still in use today.

The 1907 Schatt & Morgan catalog contains 585 knife patterns (85 of them for “pearl” knives), so the four lock blade patterns represent substantially less than one percent of the company's offerings. The one swing guard knife #116, would have faced competition from regular fixed blade hunting knives, as well as the other lock back, and necessarily, must have been a small part of the company's sales volume.



HUNTING KNIVES

No. 106—Lock Back
Nickel Steel Linings
Norway Iron Bolsters

No. 116—Lock Back
Brass Linings
German Silver Bolsters and Guards

Blades Crocus polished one side.

Cuts Full Size.

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DJL, Oc

(David Clark, 2010)



Original Schatt & Morgan Lock Back Knives, Model #116 (below) and #106 (above), Courtesy of David Clark
Queen City and Queen Production of Swing Guards, 1922-1991.

Queen City, from 1922 through reorganization at the end of World War II offered a lock back knife called the #36, that is the same pattern as the more popular #106 of the Schatt & Morgan era. Looking at the photo on page 7, it is easy to see how this knife was once a swing guard, and became one again after 1991.



From left to right: A Schatt & Morgan era swing guard (#116, after 1907-1928); Next, an Amber #36 with Queen City straight line tang stamp, long pull, saber ground clip blade; Third, A Queen Cutlery sandblasted blade etch “Q between Queen and Cutlery”, no tang stamp, Rogers Bone handles (post WWII). Fourth, a Model #36 with Winterbottom bone handles and high Carbon blade with a “big Q” tang stamp (1950-1953; Fifth, a bone handled clip blade, no etch, Qsteel tang stamp (1954 -1957); Sixth, a bone handled clip blade with Queen #36 blade etch and Qsteel tang stamp (1958-60); Seventh, a bone handled clip blade with Queen #36 blade etch, and no tang stamp (1961-1971); Eighth, a bone handled #36 with a Queen Cutlery Titusville PA blade etch, no tang stamp (early 1970s); ninth, #36, Queen Cutlery Titusville PA blade etch and no tang stamp (late 1970s), and finally, at the far right,

number ten, a re-issue of the “Old Pattern Lock Back”, 1983 (edition of 700) with Winterbottom bone handles and commemorative blade etch. (Photo courtesy of Frederick Fisher)

After the second World War, the #36 was re-introduced by Queen in 1950 (Catalog 85) and continued in the catalog through 1965. (see http://queencutlery.com/uploads/Model_36_47-2013_7-19-2015.pdf)

In all catalog listings, the One Blade Lock Pattern #36, is shown as being offered in “high carbon steel” throughout each catalog describing it (See the Queen Historical Documents website for the actual catalogs). The photo above, documents that a great many of these knives were made in stainless steel – (number #5 through 10 in the picture above were all stainless).

The way the #36 was handled in developing catalogs, suggests this knife was not a large share of sales (like the #106, and #116 before it). In the first six catalogs, (‘50, ‘52, ‘53, ‘54, ‘55, ‘56), we can see that the same photograph was for used for each one by examining the background, and details of the Winterbottom bone handle. Then, in the next four catalogs (‘59, ‘60, ‘63, ‘65), it seems the same photo was still used again, but modified by adding a “Queen Steel #36” blade etch to the blade in the picture.

Sometime early in the 50s, stainless steel was adopted for this knife, and had been accepted enough that the catalog sales people wanted to make the point by 1959. Note, that even though the item description had been re-typeset, without changing the text, and still says “high carbon” steel. Queen may have simply offered both steels depending on customer order, through the years of producing the knife, and not given too much attention to changing the catalogs.

Review of Sargent (2008) and Queen Cutlery primary catalogs from 1947 through 1991 (http://queencutlery.com/Historical_Catalogs.html), shows NO OFFERING of swing guard knives for the entire period.

The modern Queen swing guard knife was adapted from the pattern dies for the #106, and #36, held from purchasing the Schatt & Morgan factory at auction in 1933. Adding the mounting hole through the base of the blade, producing the two guards, setting the pin that mounts the guard, and buffing the bolster a bit differently were required (Personal communications, Frederick Fisher, Jenny Moore). Note that Queen Cutlery under the Daniels Family has re-issued this old Queen #36 pattern, including it as an option under some versions of model #1L.

The Queen Cutlery Company Production of Swing Guard Knives from 1992-2017.

After a short time of searching the Internet, it became clear many more than catalog swing guard knives by Queen and Schatt & Morgan were out there. With the Internet it is fairly easy to get a list of catalog knives, but private label and non-cataloged knives not kept in any public record. In that sense, the question now becomes: “How do catalog knives fit in with the larger set of Queen’s swing guard production over the period from 1992 to 2016?”

The method is simple: a.) buy every such swing guard I can off Ebay; or b.) at least print a description of the many I don’t win; c.) Do the same at four different knife shows a year; d) Talk to people who know more about knives than I do every chance I get. In particular, Fred Fisher and David Clark, have been extremely helpful. Continue this for ten years. And finally, write it all down.

Because Queen is flexible in its approach to making knives, and actively looks for large customers to commission special factory orders, I will adopt a broad three-part classification of **Queen swing guards**:

Queen Catalog knives, (QC). Simply, knives listed in annual catalogs or company sales literature;

Queen Special Projects, (QSP). Pilot projects, small runs not offered in catalogs, but with clearly identified Queen production on the knife;

Customer Special Factory Orders (SFO). Knife still shows Queen, Schatt & Morgan, or Robeson tang stamps, but also usually shows the name of a sponsoring organization in blade etch or tang stamp, who bought the entire run of knives.

Because new entries can be expected in all categories, I will also use a numbering scheme for each sub-category. So Far, knives have been entered in terms of year produced, but new knives identified in the future will just be added at the end. An Excel spreadsheet will be used to provide an overview of each knife, and of the groups.

The spreadsheet elements include: **Item number, model number, years offered, steel, Blade style, blade etch, tang stamp, guard stamp, Bolsters, handle material, shield, box, edition size, serial numbers, and sponsor.**

Because the physical features of all Queen Swing guard knives are essentially the same, we will summarize them only once: Single lock back blade of 3.5” (this to the top of the bolster. Some reports use a length of 3.3/8” to the top of the swing guard), 4.5” closed length. Most modern knives have both top and bottom bolsters, but a few knives are barehead (top bolster only). Weight is usually between 3.2 oz. and 3.6 oz. depending on handle material. The steel, blade type, blade etches, and many different handle materials, provide the sources of variability.

Some of this information is not well validated, and comes from Internet sources. A number of knives are not in my collection and have not been physically examined. This is a first edition, so be alert for errors - and for helping to correct them. You may know of knives not listed in this summary. Like to hear about them! Thank you.

Results

Please see the Exel spreadsheet (Appendix A, attached) for a tabulation of knives found. Across the three categories, the total Queen-produced swing guard versions identified is an even 100, (See Table 1), from 1992 to early 2017. There may be others – I am confident that this is a conservative estimate – one set of eyes, only ten years, and "collection hide time."

Table 1. Distribution of Queen Swing Guard Knives

Catalog knives	total 21	19%
Queen special projects	total 31	28%
<u>Special Factory Orders,</u>	<u>total 58</u>	<u>53%</u>
Total swing guard versions	110	100%

The Catalog knives represent less than 20 percent of the available versions by Queen Cutlery, over the period, 1992-till the end of 2017.

The trend toward smaller editions and proliferating versions that began in the 1990s has grown very large. The period from 1992 -2012 saw seven Queen special projects (Roughly .6 versions a year). Since 2013, when the Daniels Family acquired Queen, there have been 24 internal Queen Special Project swing guard knives, and recent Queen SFO collaboration with Yellowhorse Cutlery, Painted Pony, and Michael Prater, produced another nineteen new versions in the same period of time (43 new versions in the last four years - a rate of approximately 10.6 versions per year).

Comments on Queen Catalog Swing Guards. As described in our Guide for Model # 1, 1L, the following catalog knives were found for the period 1992-2016, under the #1L model number: Amber, Cocobolo, Carved Stag Bone, Bird's Eye Maple, Amber Carved Stag Bone, Curly Zebra, and Linen Micarta. The Rawhide swing guard (#9205) and Premium Crown Red Acrylic (PCR4) are also included in this group (Assigned numbers QC1-QC9 in the Excel list. There are no public estimates of production of any of these cataloged knives.

Because of their striking appearance and long production runs, we would expect the two ends of the line to be most popular; the first, Amber 1LA, and the last, the Amber Carved Stag bone, 1LACSB, with D2 clip blade, to be the

most popular knives from this group. Both the Rawhide and Crown Red were offered for only two years and would be the most difficult to obtain, though still sometimes very low prices can be found.

Beginning in 1992, Queen Cutlery began to offer the swing guard pattern in their production of premium knives (Schatt and Morgan annual "Keystone Series" or "File and Wire") with seven different treatments to the present day (QC10-QC17). These have all been limited production runs. They have clearly launched a new generation of collectors and many special factory orders, well past their immediate periods of sale. Of these premium knives, the 1995 Torched Sambar Stag, with spear blade, is most prized.

In the late 1990s, there was a slowdown apparent in both Catalog and limited-edition knives. Then, for some reason internal to the company or to the marketplace, there was a resurgence led by special factory orders, especially for spear blade versions.

Since 2002 to the present, Queen has shown a strong commitment to this pattern in every catalog. One can choose between Queen-labeled knives with tough D2 clip blades and choice of bone or wood handles. The 2007 File and Wire Swing guard is unique in the modern knives in having a spear blade, being barehead, and having a flat guard.

Comments on Queen Special Projects Swing Guards

The first two knives in this group were the swing guard prototypes were unique in having Schatt & Morgan clip blades and level of finish, and tang stamps, but Queen "circle Q" handle shields. These two Queen prototypes were made in very small editions of 23 and 6 units. The black saw-cut Bone has not been used by Queen in a catalog swing guard, but the Amber became the first "Every Man" working swing Guard by Queen.

QSP3, in a dark Rosewood, but with a standard Schatt & Morgan Etch is thought to be the forerunner of the very large American Blade Collectors Special Factory Order (SFO2)

Some of these special projects are not that well finished – like QSP7 - a black delrin D2 clip blade – It is not polished on ether blade or handle – maybe more like a factory internal work knife to test the new steel – not really as nice as a “salesmans’s sample.”

QSP9 in Feathered Smooth Buffalo Horn was given by current Queen Daniels Family ownership to thank me for helping with their Historical Documents Website; I believe it is 1/1. It is of course, one of the treasures of my collection.

Note the 2015 knives marked “prototype” on the blade (QSP10 and 11) were testing handle material in a barehead style, and are also not highly finished. We have not seen either of these knives result in a larger edition. But new for 2017, are two more special projects barehead versions: one in dark maple and one in torched Sambar stag.

Others are absolutely beautiful – fully completed gems of knifemaking skill, especially QSP4 and 5, and the most recent very small editions in 2016 and 2017. While there has been concerns that Queens quality suffered in the last years of the company. No doubt in some cases that may be true, but the last few issues of the swing guard seem tight and sharp in my opinion. Some of them are beautiful knives.

This characteristic of making small runs is one of the more frustrating, but most interesting aspect of Queen’s production. I envision the process as, “if the cutler is there, find some parts and have him/her make something -stay busy.” However, in this category the trend is very apparent to smaller editions (30 or fewer). This unfortunately increases the demands on pattern collectors, especially if one is enamored of “completion.” (A useful motto for shirt or ballcap for pattern knife collectors might be “Abandon Completion – Just Love Your Knives”.)

Of course, as the variability of available knives grows, it allows more personalization of any given collection. And some focus, as well as some rarity, does improve a collection in some peoples’ mind. There is also a bit of adventure in the search, and the strange, circuitous routes some of these knives take in getting to the eyes of

collectors. “Custom” knife making is merging with industrial production, and this can only mean increasing costs for any knife collector.

Comments on Special Factory Orders

The number of SFO’s producing swing guard knives was 13 customers. Knife collecting clubs make small purchases, and were frequently attracted to early Schatt & Morgan annual knives. I do not see any evidence so far beyond two SFO club knives sponsors per year in the Schatt & Morgan Series or File and Wire Series, but there is always some chance more of these knives will come out into the marketplace. It provides the company with an extra outlet for a highly-finished knife with very few changes – often just a different blade etch. Many of these knives are finely finished, and have been stored well. They are often a good value, especially if the club or etch carries meaning for you. My absolute favorite among this group is the Alleghany Mountain Knife Collectors 1993 "I survived the blizzard of 93" with a big snowman. I was in that storm, happy to be alive, watching as neighbors shoveled my driveway.

But at least for swing guards, something seemed to change in and after 2001, perhaps a company commitment to market the knife as a special-order item. Or, it may have been the commitment to the Swing Guard Pattern by the Wolverine Knife Club, which produced four beautiful knives with clip blades. But the spear blades seemed to drive this resurgence, especially Clarence Risner’s spear blade swing guards in 2001 and 2004. Sooner State Knives and Queen Classics both produced very small editions and also sold them all out. These knives remain largely hidden in collections today. There may be other hidden swing guards from this boom period in the first five years of the 21st century, and we might see more of these Queen special projects or SFOs, emerge from the closets. And about 20 or 25 years from now, some unique knives from the heavy emphasis in 2014-2016 will probably also emerge.

The most recent Yellowhorse-Painted Pony-Queen collaboration is an example of specialization in the modern knife business to produce a large line of very modern swing guard knives in a short time. Smokey Mountain Knife Works hoped to complete a line of custom handle swing guards with traditional Yellowhorse customs, but needed knives quickly, and worked with Queen, Blue Ridge Cutlery, Brian Yellowhorse, Painted Pony and Michael Prator, to

handle a large inventory of swing guard skeleton knives, in many different ways, creating very small editions. There is one traditional Yellowhorse swing guard (“The feather”) and 11 versions in brightly colored Corian swirls, or eggshell acrylics, and eight “split handle” (Shown with a note within the excel file for handle with “SH”) with varieties of mineral and stone chips set into acrylic. These split handle knives also feature a painted pony etch on the upper bolster. There may be other versions of this collaboration not yet identified.

These knives feature a clean and modern look, no blade etch, tang stamp, or guard stamp, or brass handle pins, but with nickel silver liners, high polished blades, and eye-popping color on the handles. They are easily the most modern treatment the Queen swing guard has received. They come in a plastic sleeve and not much name or model information, so people have been very creative naming these knives according to the handle material.

These knives have several cost savings in production and certainly, more choice for consumers. With stainless blade and plastic handle, they actually represent another everyday carry option to the stabilized wood catalog knives. In fact, in a conversation with Michael Prater about these knives, he stresses that if any customer had one of these Corian or acrylic handles break, contact him (Painted Pony.com) and his company would repair that knife at no cost. These knives were marketed so hard across many Internet sellers, in small editions, in a fairly short period of time, that it would be extremely hard to ever acquire a “full set.” There were simply too many. Streamlined manufacturing, with space-age materials, and collaborations by specialists gives us a hint about the direction of American Knife manufacture.

Variations in the Queen Spear Point Blade Used on Swing Guard Knives, 1994 - 2016

While the clip blade used all Queen swing guards has changed but little, there has been considerable variation in the spear blades Queen has used. In their advertisement for the annual Schatt and Morgan Series in 1994, Queen indicates the swing guard pattern is "newly revised with a spear blade." Updating the blade from the old Shatt & Morgan #109 to their #04111L swing guard (the orange corncob Bone). The next figure shows this 1994 blade with a deep swedge and a well-defined center line from the sabre grind, and a long pull for opening; Next, a Robeson spear point from about 2002 or 3, with a complete

flat grind and small nail nick far out on the blade; Number three in this picture is a Clarence Risner SFO Brown bone swing guard, which retains the long pull, and a modest swedge, but is essentially flat ground. Number four, the 1013 1LLM linen micarta knife uses the identical handle from the Robeson, flat ground and nail nick, although with D2 steel; The fifth knife, one of the Queen Special Projects for 2016, uses a carbon blade with a very deep swedge, long pull, and a sabre grind that is rounded above the center line. The blade has a satin finish and is very sharp. This is the kind of recent production I alluded to in the introduction, less “hunter,” more “urban personal defense.” For a knife meant for heavy use the sabre grinds are preferred in my opinion. Of course, flat grinds are more economical.

Variations in Queen spear point blades for swing guard knives



In conclusion,

Through well over 100 years, the swing guard knife has had a home in Titusville, PA, through four very separate periods of ownership. In the modern era, under Servotronics ownership, the pattern was re-introduced in very nice premium knives, and in hard-work catalog knives. Collectors took immediate notice and sales have help

fuel the huge increase in versions of this pattern now available. Queen has built a strong tradition of excellence for the swing guard pattern. In particular, some of the special project knives over the last year have been among the best ever seen by this company in my opinion. You have to like this knife to make them this well.

I cannot say if the ratio of catalog knives to total versions (1/5) holds true for other patterns. I would not be surprised if the trends I see with a swing guard pattern would also hold true for the most popular models of folding knife – stockman, trapper, peanut, Mountain man, Tiny toothpick, for example). Some of those patterns might have accumulated huge leads over the swing guard, clip or spear! I do not know.

As a collector, economic questions start to emerge: How narrow should a big collection be? What is the marginal utility of each subsequent knife? Is virtual ownership enough? (This project is my attempt at virtual ownership...)

For me, since the completion of a collection, becomes too expensive and very little hope of "success" because edition sizes shrink to tiny levels, I plan to start paying much more attention to the things I like about each knife I do choose to own. I'm going to look at it, handle it, maintain it – not just put it away as future money. Certainly, as price and rarity go up, so also do my demands for quality of manufacture. "Look at your Knife." I mean "LOOK AT YOUR KNIFE". The appeal of each individual knife will need to start replacing the sense of "completion" for me.

In fact, funny as it may seem – on the path to collectors' ruin, I have also started looking at and collecting/investing in other patterns!

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