

# Fish Alaska Boats

## Bay Weld and Ashbreez

Story by Troy Buzalsky

Good or bad, a company's reputation is almost always forefront in a customer's mind, and it's no different in the marine industry. When looking for a quality boat or boat manufacturer, there are many elements that inspire one's desire to take the plunge: Build-quality, on-the-water performance, fuel economy, style and lines, price and even what your friends and relatives think. All too often, however, the company's reputation is either the dealmaker or the dealbreaker.

But in the age of endless internet reviews, how does a boating enthusiast truly seek out the authentic reputation of a company? Well, one of the best ways is to gather your facts from reliable sources, particularly end-users of the product.

This king season I spent a good amount of time dogging around the marinas of

Homer and Seward, drooling over all the salty vessels while asking lots of questions. I spoke with owners, captains, deckhands and anglers, getting a real feel for each boat's reputation. My conclusion, and the scope of this boat column, is both Bay Weld and Armstrong Boats are premier fishing vessels for Alaska waters with five-star reputations. This column will explore Bay Weld Boats from Homer and Ashbreez Boatworks from Anchorage, who, through a special relationship, works with Armstrong Marine to deliver an exceptional line of made-for-Alaska watercraft.

### Ashbreez Boatworks LLC

Conveniently located on the northwest tip of Cook Inlet in Anchorage, Ashbreez Boatworks has been earning their reputation maintaining many in the fleet of southcentral Alaska. Specializing in fiberglass, wood and aluminum repair and fabrication, there is no job too tough, too large or too small for their capable craftsmen. Major structural repairs,



The cockpit of an Ashbreez St. Elias features a forward-leaning windscreen that is fully insulated with R-Tec closed-cell insulation, while also coming loaded with the best in Garmin marine electronics. © Melissa Norris



The Ashbreez Boatworks St. Elias monohull, pictured at top, boasts a 28- to 32-foot length with a beamy 9-foot, 6-inch width. (Middle) Everything about the St. Elias build is well-thought out and designed for efficiency. At bottom, the St. Elias cabin is accented with teak throughout, and among other creature-comforts, boasts bench seats with plenty of storage and a mini-galley with refrigerator, stove and sink. © Melissa Norris

refurbishments, top-side painting, system and repowers, bottom painting and routine maintenance have kept this family-owned business on their toes. Recently Ashbreez has added bare hull completions to their dossier with very positive results.

Wanting to bring a proven, known design to the Alaska market, Ashbreez has allied in collaboration with Armstrong Marine, Inc., of Port Angeles, WA. The partnership involves Armstrong building aluminum bare hulls and delivering them to Ashbreez for completion, utilizing Armstrong's popular monohull and catamaran designs, two designs that are ideal for Alaska and the anglers who fish these waters.

The first question one might ask is why Armstrong? Why not build your own? The answer was easy for Ashbreez: Reputation. Armstrong Marine has been building seaworthy boats for more than 25 years and is well known for their durability and performance. Armstrong has also built more catamarans than any other builder in the U.S. and their design has proven itself excellent for fishing, cruising and as a workhorse of a work boat. Armstrong also builds top-performing planing monohull boats that grace many marinas, charters and lodges throughout the Pacific.

Currently, the two platform collaborations include the Ashbreez Resurrection 32, based on the 32- x 11-foot catamaran and the St. Elias monohull, which boasts a 28- to 32-foot length with a beamy 9-foot, 6-inch width. The St. Elias was at the Seward Marina on my last stop and I can attest that I was not the only marina cruiser that was in shock and awe at its stately beauty.

In less than two months from time



of order, Ashbreez takes delivery of the Armstrong "Bare Hull," and we're talking bare: Just the bones, expertly welded by an organization that employs nationally- and internationally-certified welders to assure the highest quality possible. From that point, Ashbreez completes the build, painting, rigging, power and electronics exactly to their customers' specifications. This assures the client gets exactly what they want, within an agreed-upon schedule, to Ashbreez's exacting specifications.

Ashbreez is a member of American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC) and completes all of its work according to ABYC standards. They are also a member of the American Boat Builders and Repairs Association (ABBRA) and adheres to its code of ethics. Couple that with the knowledge and experience of owner Chad Morse and his son, Captain Joel Morse, and you can see why Ashbreez has earned a reputation for high-quality work, fair prices and timeliness.

The St. Elias 28 is quite a watercraft. The hull is fabricated from marine-grade 5086 aluminum skins and 5052 transverse frames with full-length longitudinal channels and hull stiffeners. The deck is 100% self-bailing and the swim-step features a hull extension offshore bracket to support the 300 horsepower outboard while enhancing on-the-water performance.

The stately cabin features a forward-leaning windscreen, which is fully insulated with R-Tec closed-cell insulation. Accented with teak throughout, creature-comforts include full grab-rails, marine head, bench seats with storage and a mini-galley with refrigerator, stove and sink. AJR Marine windows are fully operable and the AJR door provides security as well as functionality. All interior lighting is energy-efficient LED and the cockpit is loaded with the best in Garmin marine electronics. For added storage you'll find an oversized below-deck dry locker.

The boat's cuddy is spacious, practical and fully-insulated. The fuel cell is rated at 140 U.S. gallons with a 10-gallon diesel heater tank for Espar D2 cabin heat, 20-pound propane tank for cooking, 25-gallon freshwater tank and 25-gallon blackwater tank.

The 28-foot Elias is a trailerable boat and comes complete with a Tuff Triple Axle I-Beam aluminum trailer with a two-speed winch; not even the Whittier Tunnel will slow you down with its 10-foot width and 14-foot height restriction. Ashbreez has earned a reputation as a leading boatworks facility in the 49th state and the addition of their partnership with Armstrong marine will only enhance their standing in the marine community. For more information on Ashbreez and their collaborative partnership with Armstrong Marine go to: [www.ashbreezboatworks.com](http://www.ashbreezboatworks.com).

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### Bay Welding Services—Bay Weld Boats

Homer may be known as the Halibut Capital of the World, but when it comes to boating popularity and reputation, Bay Weld Boats of Kachemak Bay, AK, takes top honors. Don't believe me? Take a walk at the Homer Marina and you will see dozens upon dozens of Bay Weld Boats. Charter boats, sport-fishing boats, day-cruisers, even a few working boats, all lined up for their next adventure.

In business since 1974 and officially boat-building since 1994, the commercial fishing industry is where Bay Welding Services and Bay Weld Boats cut their teeth, later entering the sport-fishing and charter-boat market. Quality over quantity is the name of the game, as there are no cookie-cutter boats out of the Bay Weld shop; everything is 100% custom. Building boats typically from 23- to 40 feet in length with widths up to a whopping 12 feet, the customer has full control. Bay Weld has built boats as large as 54- x 20 feet and has the capability to build up to 80- x 21 feet in their fully-enclosed and heated shop.

Being quality-focused, Bay Weld Boats builds approximately 5- to 10 boats per year, employing roughly 20 community members and craftsmen year-round. "When it comes to true custom boat-building, the only thing we won't do is compromise the integrity of our hulls," shares General Manager and



The Bay Weld Sport Walk-around features a functional walk-around pilot house designed with excellent fishing characteristics (above). Below, the typical Bay Weld boat features an aggressive deep-V bottom that is carefully designed to give a smooth ride without compromising speed or performance. © Bay Weld Boats

family partner Eric Engebretsen. "The customer starts with a blank slate—any size, any features. It becomes our goal to work with the customer to meet whatever their needs are, focusing on function as well as

aesthetics." Bay Weld Boats recently earned the coveted endorsement "Made in Alaska" through the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, adding to their excellent reputation.

The **Predator Hybrid 220** features an Inboard 200 HP Mercury SportJet engine that will allow you to access the most extreme shallow water. Other features include heavy gauge aluminum construction, dual flat top consoles with walk-thru windshield, 40 gallon aerated livewell, 26 gallon fuel tank, and a rear deck with storage.

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The Bay Weld Sport Live-aboard offers spacious, downright luxurious comfort in a boat that's still built to fish, making it the ideal craft for those long-range excursions along Alaska's coast. © Bay Weld Boats

Located in Kachemak Bay has proved advantageous for both Bay Welding Services and Bay Weld Boats. Homer is in the center of coastal Alaska and located on the main road-system. There are also excellent marine suppliers and services in Homer and a vibrant harbor. Homer itself is a destination for many boaters and anglers, and as Engebretsen says, "We are right here to service the boats after we build them or help with repairs overtime. We spend a lot of time on the water since we play where we work." This allows Bay Weld to better understand what their customers and

boaters need in an Alaska-built boat.

The typical Bay Weld boat is designed around an aggressive deep-V bottom that is carefully designed to give a smooth ride without compromising speed or performance. Bay Weld also crafts a uniquely designed catamaran ideal for everything Alaska. Bay Weld offers a host of power options, including single- and dual-outboard configurations as well as an inboard diesel option that provides reliability, efficiency and long-range capacity.

Bay Weld has built a number of six-pack charter vessels, hailed in the industry as

extremely dry, stable in rough water and all-around excellent fishing platforms. Other models include the Sport Cuddy with its full-width pilot house, ideal for family outings, fishing and weekend getaways. The Sport Walk-around features a fully functional walk-around pilot house designed with excellent fishing characteristics, incorporating a fully functional yet economical cabin arrangement. The Sport Live-aboard is specifically designed for long overnight stays with an emphasis on comfort and amenities. Features include a full galley with cook stove or oven, a large dinette, bunks for four, a private head with shower and a private stateroom. Bay Weld also builds two unique boats, the topless Open Console and the Landing Craft. The Landing Craft is the go-anywhere, land-anywhere, transport and exploration boat of choice that needs to be viewed firsthand to fully appreciate what it has to offer.

It says a lot about a boat-builder's reputation when you visit the websites of their charter-boat customers and they spend as much time bragging about their Bay Weld boats as they do to about the fishing opportunities! For more information, visit [bayweldboats.com](http://bayweldboats.com).



Troy A. Buzalsky is a contributing editor for Fish Alaska magazine.



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