

Small truck category is reborn

Many said it couldn't be done. Compact pickups were a much-beloved vehicle segment some decades back—part of the original Japanese “invasion.” Then they started growing bigger (many of today's midsize pickups are their direct descendants). Partly, this reflected market tastes and demand, but the growth in airbag, side impact, rollover and other safety requirements led to inevitable evolutionary growth in size.

Ford has now clean-sheet revisited the idea, and here it is—the Maverick compact pickup.

Unlike those little trucks of half a century ago, Maverick has a unibody build and is front-drive-based. And unlike those classics' 100-or-so horsepower, you have either 191 total horsepower from a 2.5-liter hybrid system (it's the first pickup in the US with a hybrid as its standard powertrain) or 250 hp from an optional 2.0-liter EcoBoost engine.

Many are quick to call this a “city truck,” for its maneuverability and parking ease. But its sturdy build and ample ground clearance make it great for back road camping, fishing and exploring, and it can tow. With room for five adults and innovative cargo and storage space, Maverick can handle the groceries or outdoor gear equally capably. Under-seat storage is rugged enough for work tools, spacious enough for basketballs.

The four-and-a-half-foot bed boasts a Flexbed™ system with up to 12 anchor points, a multi-position tailgate and recesses to place boards as dividers or platforms for cargo (including 4x8 building materials flat above the wheel wells). Two 12-volt 20-amp plus two available 110-volt outlets in the back can power your tools, laptop or tailgate party.

Dimensions and specifications for both powerplants are generally the same, and both have a 1500-lb payload capacity (equal to thirty-seven 40-pound bags of concrete mix or mulch). The hybrid has a 2,000-pound tow capacity (good for dirt bikes or personal watercraft); the EcoBoost truck tows the same, or up to 4,000 pounds with a package, enough for about a 23-foot camper trailer.

Fuel capacity is smaller on the Hybrid (13.8 gal versus 16.5 gal on the EcoBoost), presumably making room for battery and other hybrid mechanicals, though the Hybrid makes up for that with an anticipated 40 MPG city fuel mileage (to be confirmed).

Both the Hybrid and EcoBoost come in XL, XLT and Lariat trims, any and all as front-drivers or with all-wheel drive optional.

The Ford Maverick is being built at the company's Hermosillo Assembly Plant, just south of us in Sonora, Mexico. Detailed pricing information and anticipated dealer arrival will be forthcoming. ■

