



Snow, Salt, Smoke.

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**This winter beater is more fun than you would expect,
especially in the summertime...**

Snow. Ice. Salt. The joys of winter in New York. If you're a hot rodder living in the snow belt, you are well aware that you can't drive your hot rod all year long. Cruising season seems to come and go in no time.

So what do you do for the rest of the year? You find yourself a sporty front-wheel-drive to have fun with.

A car like this 1995 Beretta Z26 handles daily driver duties

very well. It's a sharp car that is capable of plenty of fun when the need for speed crawls through your veins.

Some may ask, why a Beretta? It doesn't exactly have the reputation of a car with much potential. By now, many Berettas on the road are trashed and neglected. The resale value is low and many others have already spent time in junk yards and met their fate with the dreaded car crusher.

There are some advantages to the Beretta though, especially for someone on a tight budget due to that hot rod project. You can pick one up cheap. This Z26 was bought for less than \$2,000 with under 100,000 miles.

And despite its reputation, the Beretta has a decent following if you know where to look. There are 3 active forums online with nearly 5000 members in the niche that Beretta fills under Camaro.



I stumbled upon Beretta.net and Berettastuff after searching for some information on my first car, a 1990 Beretta GTZ. As with many Beretta owners, you can't own just one, and I picked up a second, the Z26.

In stock form the heartbeat comes from a 155hp 3.1 liter V6 and a 4-speed electronically controlled automatic transmission good for 30+ miles per gallon on the highway with its 2.93 gearing. It's a stylish car that will turn some heads, but performance-wise, it's much like any other front-wheel-drive coupe on the road. It's not lightning fast and doesn't exactly ride like it's on rails. With a high

16-second 1/4 mile time and a somewhat conservation suspension, it's far too easy to mistake a Z26 for any run-of-the-mill grocery getter. Inject a little attitude, and this sporty little coupe wakes right up.

The 3.1L engine in the Beretta was replaced in favor of a 3.4L picked from a 4k mile 2004 Impala. The newer engine has more displacement, better flowing heads and intakes, as well as a roller cam and roller rockers. New technology is a beautiful thing.

Bolt-ons and some custom work get more power to the pavement. The Z breathes cold fender well air through a K&N filter on Tranzgenic intake piping and the 56mm throttle body. Exhaust gasses are spent through custom 2.5" exhaust with a



Catco converter and Borla muffler. There is no mistaking this car for a factory Beretta.

Polyurethane/billet aluminum engine mounts from Fast Forward Performance eliminate flex and the FFP underdrive crank pulley frees up a dynoed 9 horsepower. Traction was never a problem with the anemic 3.1L, but the new powerplant will roast the hides from a stop.

It ran 14.9@92mph at Lebanon Valley Dragway in its current configuration, down from 17.1@79mph before the swap.

The suspension has been stiffened up with a front strut tower brace, rear shock tower brace and an Addco 1" rear sway bar. 17x7" Speedy Lite-5 wheels with 225/45/R17 Hankook tires reduce unsprung weight as well as providing a wider contact patch and shorter sidewall than the stock 16" wheels. Eibach Pro Kit lowering springs drop the body about an inch and provide better cornering coupled with KYB struts and shocks.

The first thing you notice about

the appearance of this car is the color. It's black, very black. The windows are tinted to 15% and headlight covers up front and the



factory tinted tail lights out back add to the look. The big five-spoke wheels are black with a polished aluminum lip. Minimal red accents like the brake calipers and bracing complete the color scheme.



As with any daily driver, most of your time is spent inside, and the eighties-style maroon interior was intolerable to my taste. The whole interior was modified to fit the style of the rest of the car. Everything



1995 Chevrolet Beretta Z26
Front Wheel Drive
V6 / Automatic

14.940 sec @ 92.52 mph
200 hp / 230 ft-lbs
0.88 g
23/30 mpg

that was maroon is now black. There is nothing that hasn't been ripped out and then put back in, two or three times.

All the interior panels were dyed black and new carpet from Auto Custom Carpet was laid down. The rear shelf was fitted with Sony Xplod 6x9 speakers. The aftermarket front seats and junk yard rear seat both drop weight from the originals.

The leather shift knob and e-brake handles are donated from a third-gen Camaro and the leather-wrapped steering wheel is from a Lumina Z34. The brushed aluminum gauge overlay matches the custom stereo overlay and engraved "Z26". The stereo is a Sony Xplod CD/MP3 head unit with Sony Xplod speakers to keep the red and silver color combination throughout the car.

Plans call to swap in a Getrag 282 5-speed manual transmission

to make the drivetrain more efficient and add in the fun factor of rowing your own gears.

The last plan calls for a 2" cowl-induction hood made from US Body. The hood will give the Chevy a classic American look and further separate it from the average front-wheel-drive.

This car makes a routine trip to work or the store much more fun when you can't break out your hot rod. Punch the loud pedal and it'll roar. Throw it into a sharp turn and it'll stick. Drive it down the road and people will notice. Push it to the limits and adrenaline will flow. Shouldn't every car be like that?



[/snow,salt,smoke.]

SPEED READING

Drivetrain

3400 sfi v6 (3.4l)
4t60-e 4-speed automatic
ffp underdrive pulley
ffp poly/billet engine mounts
k&n/tranzgenic cold air intake
custom 2.5" exhaust
summit exhaust cutout
catco catalytic converter
borla bullet muffler

Suspension

eibach pro kit lowering springs
kyb struts and shocks
front & rear shock tower brace
addco 1" rear sway bar
speedy lite-5 17x7" wheels
225/45/r17 hankook tires

Interior

complete black conversion
new seats, carpeting, decklid
dyed dash and interior panels
lumina z34 steering wheel
leather shift knob & e-brake
sony xplod cd/mp3 head unit
sony xplod speakers