

FAQ OF THE INTERNET BBQ LIST

Version 1.0

Date of last update: 9/21/97

This document is a compilation and summary of frequently asked questions and answers posted to the Rick Thead BBQ List. We hope this list of questions and answers will help you improve your barbecue skills. This FAQ was edited by Bill Wight. Please direct comments, corrections or suggested additions to: wight@odc.net.

(C) Copyright 1997 William W. Wight. All rights reserved. The contributions of the individual posters contained within this document remain their property. You may copy and distribute this document as long as the contributor's names and this copyright notice remain intact.

I have given credit for each answer provided in this document where the author was known. Special thanks for extra effort goes to Ed Pawlowski, Harry Jiles, Danny Gaulden, Jeff Lipsitt aka the Boston Butt, Billy Maynard aka Belly, Rodney Leist, Kit Anderson, David Westebbe aka EskWIRED, David Klose, Rick Otto and Garry Howard.

Special thanks also go to the BBQ List FAQ Team which gave me guidance, criticism and a lot of support in putting together this document: Ed Pawlowski, Lloyd Carver, Tom Kelly, Garry Howard, Rock McNelly, Rodney Leist, Dan Gill, and The Bear.

The Mini-FAQ is mainly the work of Ed Pawlowski.

My thanks also to the FAQ proof readers, Jon McCoy and my wife, Mary Wight.

This FAQ is dedicated to the memory of Phil Wight, one of the original BBQ List members and a regular poster to the rec.food.cooking newsgroup. Phil was always ready to share his knowledge, his ideas, recipes or the time of day. Phil passed away on June 7, 1997. We'll miss him.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction to the BBQ List	5
1.1. Who we are	5
1.2. What we do here	5
1.3. Charter	5
1.4. Definition of terms	6
2. What is barbecue?	7
2.1. Our definition	7
2.2. What is the "correct" way to spell it?	7
3. Administrative	8
3.1. How to get on the list	8
3.2. How to get off the list	8
3.3. Posting guidelines	8
3.4. Front porch rules apply	9
3.5. Digest vs. individual messages	9
3.6. Where can I find the archived digests?	9
3.7. Where can I find the recipe archives?	10
3.8. Are there other barbecue lists?	10
3.9. Is there a newsgroup about barbecue?	10
3.10. Confessions of a newbie to barbecue	10
3.11. How can I get updates and different formats of this FAQ?	11
4. Tell me about barbecue in general -- The Mini-FAQ	11
5. Hardware--Smokers	19
5.1. Home smokers	20
5.1.1. New Braunfels Smokers	22
5.1.2. Brinkmann Corporation	25
5.1.3. SnP Pro vs. the NBBB and Hondo	26
5.1.4. BBQ Pits by Klose	27
5.1.5. Oklahoma Joe's Pits	28
5.1.6. Weber Grills	29
5.1.7. Char-Broil	30
5.1.8. Cookshack Ovens	31
5.2. Homemade pits This section under construction	31
5.3. Brick and block pits	31
6. Hardware--accessories	31
6.1. Thermometers	31
6.1.1. Pros and cons of thermometers	33
6.1.2. Where should I measure the temperature?	34
6.2. Tools	34
7. Tell Me About Using Smokers	36
7.1. Most common mistakes made by beginners	36
7.2. Smoker modifications	38
7.2.1. Modifying charcoal-burning bullet water-type smokers	38
7.2.2. Modifying the Hondo/NBBB or SnP Pro smokers	39
7.3. Smoker maintenance	42
7.4. Smoker temperature control	44
7.5. Smoker fire control	46

7.6. Using chips and chunks for smoke	52
7.7. Wood vs. charcoal	53
7.8. Briquettes vs. lump charcoal	53
7.9. Gas-fired smokers	55
7.10. Electrically-heated smokers	55
8. Wood for smoking	55
8.1. Types of wood suitable for smoking	55
8.2. To bark or not to bark	59
8.3. Pre-burning wood	59
8.4. Green or seasoned?	60
8.5. What types of wood should I not use?	60
8.6. How much does lump charcoal and smoking wood cost?	60
9. Dry rubs and BBQ sauces	61
9.1. Dry rubs	61
9.2. BBQ sauces	66
10. We're smoking meats here	74
10.1. Pork	74
10.1.1. Ribs	74
10.1.2. Picnics and butts	79
10.1.3. Whole ham	84
10.1.4. Pork chops	84
10.1.5. The Whole hog	85
10.1.6. Bacon	85
10.1.7. Sausages	85
10.1.8. Hot dogs	86
10.2. Beef	86
10.2.1. Brisket	86
10.2.2. Jerky	92
10.2.3. Steaks	95
10.2.4. Short Ribs	96
10.2.5. Roasts	96
10.3. Chicken	99
10.3.1. Breasts	99
10.3.2. Leg quarters	100
10.3.3. Whole chicken	101
10.4. Turkey	102
10.4.1. Breasts	102
10.4.2. Legs	103
10.4.3. Whole turkey	103
10.5. Pheasant	104
10.6. Lamb	104
10.7. Venison	106
10.8. Fish	107
11. Freezing barbecue meat and leftovers	111
12. What goes well with BBQ?	113
12.1. Coleslaw	113
12.2. Beans	114
12.3. Chili	116
12.4. Corn	116
12.5. Potatoes	117
12.6. Cornbread	118

13. Barbecue portion size	119
14. Problems while barbecuing--What went wrong?	119
15. Making Lump Charcoal	125
16. Smoking chiles	126
17. Books on barbecue	126
18. Where do I buy this barbecue stuff?	128
19. Other Internet resources on barbecue	131

1. Introduction to the BBQ List

1.1. Who we are

Why, we're just a bunch of down-home folk, a lot like you. We're carpenters, paleontologists, home-makers, plumbers, farmers, cooks and engineers (and just about everything in between). We're a diverse group that has one thing in common--we like barbecue.

1.2. What we do here

We like to sit on the front porch, around the barbecue pit, watching the smoke rising out of the stack, drinking a beer or a Dr. Pepper and having us a real good chat about barbecue, the size of the universe, the meaning of life and other important stuff.

We also, from time to time, if the feeling strikes us just right, and we've got a beer or Dr. Pepper in hand, will impart our "Q" knowledge to newcomers to barbecue that will enable them to increase their barbecuing skills to levels unheard of a hundred years ago. So stick around, read the posts and join the fun. Who knows, you might just learn a thing or two about barbecue, the size of the universe, the meaning of life and other important stuff. BTW, if we don't know the answer to your question, we'll just make one up.

1.3. Charter

Our Charter--

The BBQ Mailing List was started in early 1996 by Richard Thead to facilitate the discussion of barbecue and grilling.

We don't discuss religion, or politics and we post no obscene pictures (provided you don't look at the mugs of some of our members on Garry's Web page--<http://www.tiac.net/users/garhow/bbq/bbqlist/photos.htm>). Please don't look--as it's pretty scary and people have left the list after seeing them.

We talk about Q here. We answer questions about Q. We fight about Q. We take Q seriously. That's what we do. Sometimes, opinions and prejudices border on religion, but just keep in mind that most of the time a post that sounds critical, or even hostile, is most likely done tongue-in-cheek. Don't take everything you read on this list too seriously, in fact don't take anything you read on this list too seriously! (Except safety.)

Here is what Rick Thead used to send to new list subscribers:

"I'd like to keep this list fun and informative for everybody. Hopefully, we can keep the flames to a minimum. We all need to keep in mind that bbq means different things in different places. I'm as guilty as anybody of being a bbq snob. However, for this list, anything having to do with smoking, grilling or any other type of 'outdoor' cooking is welcome. The only thing I'd like to discourage is the so-called 'oven bbq,' where you throw something in the oven with a bottle of liquid smoke and call it bbq. There are plenty recipes for that in the recipe archives already, and it has no place here."
Rick <thead@azstarnet.com>

If you are a new member and discussion topics seem to be wandering, just stick around awhile and see what happens. Many of the list members have been participants for many months and have grown to be friends. Some members even get together occasionally around the country to share barbecue and swap stories (more likely lies). Consequently, other topics of discussion may spring up temporarily but the discussion will come back around to barbecue. Just be patient.

[I'm new to the Internet and this BBQ List. Just what is a FAQ, anyway?]

Jerry Ward--

I will take a stab at letting you in on some Internet etiquette. FAQ stands for Frequently Asked Questions. Most groups on the Internet have a FAQ. It is recommended that you read it first before posting any questions, as it may contain your answers. That way, the same basic questions don't need to be answered over and over each time a newbie (new person such as yourself) joins the list.

1.4. Definition of terms

Bandwidth	A term used to describe an undefined amount of traffic on the Internet. An example would be: "Posting pictures to the BBQ List is a waste of bandwidth."
ECB	El Cheapo Brinkmann smoking pit. Refers to a vertical water smoker made by several manufacturers that costs in the neighborhood of \$30. Can produce, in the hands of a skilled pitmaster, prize-winning barbecue.
Hondo	A smoking pit made by New Braunfels and called the Hondo. It is an off-set firebox type smoker. It is almost identical to the Black Diamond and is functionally equivalent to the Brinkmann SnP Pro.
IMHO	In My Humble Opinion.
KCBS	The Kansas City Barbecue Society. They sanction many barbecue competitions.
Larding	A technique for use with very lean meats where slabs of fat are placed on the outside of the meat. This acts like a fatter piece of meat and the fat bastes the meat as it smokes. The slabs of fat can be 1/2 to 1" thick and can be held in place with cotton string, the kind you'd use to tie a rolled-roast. Discard the fat when the meat comes out of the pit.
Lazy-Que	A derogatory term used by wood-burning pit traditionalists referring to those who choose to use gas or electricity to fuel their pits and wood chips and or chunks for smoke. The Lazy-Q'ers thereby relieve themselves of the necessity to expend any but the most trivial effort in the act of barbecuing.
MIM	Memphis In May. A barbecue society and a barbecue competition held each May in Memphis, TN.
MD	Mindless Drivel. A term used for postings to the BBQ List that are utterly without any redeeming social merit, sort of like smut. 'I can't describe it, but I know it when I see it'. If you wish to post a non-barbecue-related message to the BBQ List, as a courtesy to other list members, include the letters 'MD' in the subject header so that list members who do not wish to read it may delete it easily. Non-barbecue information that is of interest to the entire list is not considered MD. For example, posts that tell us when a list member gets married, has a child, an anniversary, a party, wins an award, etc. This is family news and we want to hear about it. The BBQ List is different things to different

people. To some, it is a primary outlet for social interaction, to others it is an avenue to learn about and share barbecue information. This dichotomy of points of view sometimes leads to conflict on the list--social chatting vs. barbecue related posts. What we, as the users of the BBQ List, must do is to respect the needs of each other and strive for a balance between the two points of view.

NBBB	A smoking pit made by New Braunfels and called the Black Diamond. It is identical to the Hondo except it has a wooden front shelf instead of a metal shelf.
Pseudo-Q	or Faux-Q (don't say this one out loud). Meat that is boiled in water (parboiled) and then finished on the grill and served with a BBQ sauce containing liquid smoke product. Also used to refer to foods cooked in the oven that simulate real BBQ. These are taboo on the BBQ List.
SnP Pro	A smoking pit made by the Brinkmann Corporation called the Smoke'N Pit Professional. It is an off-set firebox type smoker, with a wooden front shelf.
SWOCS	A barbecue pit made by Southwest Outdoor Cooking Systems. A vertical pit that uses gas for fuel and to heat and burn wood chips or pellets to produce the smoke. The company ceased operations in early 1997.
Thread	On Internet mailing lists or on newsgroups, a discussion on a particular topic that goes on for days, weeks, months, or in some cases years. An example could be a 'thread' on how to smoke chicken.
URL	Uniform Resource Locator. An Internet Web page or FTP address.

2. What is barbecue?

2.1. Our definition

 [Just what is barbecue?]

Ed Pawlowski--

There are many interpretations of the term 'barbecue' in the world. Some people use it to describe a social gathering and cooking outdoors. Others use it to describe grilling food. For our purpose here, we are using the term to describe meat, slow-cooked using wood smoke to add flavor. There is equipment designed just for this type of cooking.

Barbecuing is not grilling. Grilling is cooking over direct heat, usually a hot fire for a short time. Barbecuing is cooking by using indirect heat at low temperatures and long cooking times. It is the smoke from the wood gives barbecue its unique and delicious flavor.

2.2. What is the "correct" way to spell it?

 [I've seen it spelled 'barbecue', 'barbeque', Bar-b-que, Bar-B-Que, 'BBQ', 'Q', and 'Que'. Which way is correct?]

Darned if we know. It tastes the same to us no matter how we spell it. For this FAQ, we will try to use the spelling: 'barbecue', from Mr. Webster's big book and the abbreviation 'BBQ'. We have left the word 'Barbeque' as is where it is in a title or URL location.

3. Administrative

3.1. How to get on the list

To subscribe to the Thead BBQ List, set your Web browser to this URL:

<http://listserv.azstarnet.com/cgi-bin/lwgate/listsavail.html>

Follow the directions to subscribe to the BBQ List. You have a choice--regular or digest format.

Or you can send an email to: bbq-request@listserv.azstarnet.com

and in the body of the message put: SUBSCRIBE BBQ

3.2. How to get off the list

To unsubscribe to the Thead BBQ List, set your Web browser to this URL:

<http://listserv.azstarnet.com/cgi-bin/lwgate/listsavail.html>

Follow the directions to unsubscribe to the BBQ List.

Or you can send an email to: bbq-request@listserv.azstarnet.com

and in the body of the message put: UNSUBSCRIBE BBQ

To change from the regular to digest format or the other way around, you must first unsubscribe to the format you are currently receiving and then subscribe to the format you wish to receive.

3.3. Posting guidelines

Editor--

As with any newsgroup or mailing list, there are certain courtesies to which all subscribers should adhere.

- 1 We are all friends here. There should be no posts that are insulting or degrading to any members of the list.
- 2 Flame wars. When someone does post an insulting or degrading message, it's best just to ignore it. What often happens is that the post is responded to and a flame war on the list ensues. This is a total waste of bandwidth and does nothing but make people mad and hurt feelings. Flame wars have no place on the BBQ List.
- 3 There are women and kids on this list, so all posts should be respectful of that audience.
- 4 Avoid sending posts to the list that are devoid of any real information content to the list members, such as 'one-liners' and 'me-too' posts. These just waste bandwidth.
- 5 Use private email to a list member for messages that are not of concern or interest to all list members.
- 6 When you reply to a post by another list member, cut the original post to the minimum number of lines necessary to make a meaningful reference. Please save the bandwidth--the Internet is getting to be a very crowded place.

- 7 When posting to the BBQ List, never include attachments, such as documents, drawings, sound files, video clips or pictures. Many email programs cannot process attachments and sending them can cause all kinds of problems, as well as wasting a lot of bandwidth. If you have an attachment you wish to share with the List, please put it on a Web page and post its URL.
- 8 When posting a message to the List and you have a barbecue-related question, make sure that the subject line of the message reflects your question. For example, 'Subject: How do I smoke fish?' will get you answers.
- 9 Advertising on this list is discouraged. If you do it, expect to get flamed big time. If you can condense your ad to a couple of lines, put it in your signature. Then no one will complain too loudly. If someone asks questions about your product or service, just answer them by private email.
- 10 Remember, we're here to have some fun and to share information on barbecuing.

3.4. Front porch rules apply

Rodney Leist--

The BBQ List is a loose-structured, tight-knit group of folks from all over the world who have adopted a casual "front porch get-together" climate for discussions. If you've never participated in a front porch meeting before, here's the way it usually works. Generally, at the start, serious topics are discussed in depth and at length with many varying opinions, pro and con, thrown out for whatever they are worth. For us the topics involve what and how to barbecue (and all that goes with it).

As time wears on, jokes and bull sessions are injected and other topics gradually creep into the discussions, displacing the primary topics. Some folks who are not interested in the off topic exchanges, may decide to take care of some other business for a while. Hopefully most of them gradually return. Occasional lulls in the conversation occur. Some folks get busy or stop to ponder, or maybe even sulk, then all of a sudden, the discussion fires back up to a "Del key" numbing pace before once again returning to issues focusing around the primary topic. The cycle continues into the wee hours of the night, again and again and again. Along the way, somehow we manage to talk a lot about barbecue.

With any front porch gathering, there's always assorted types of folks from "very verbal" to "quiet and reserved", and so it is with the BBQ List. Some posters you like, some you respect, some you tolerate, some you wish would go away and some you hardly even know are there. The single most important thing gluing the front porch session together is that everybody stepping up on the porch is there because they have something in common and want to be there. Listening, learning, participating and tolerating (who and what you don't like). These are the things that make the front porch meeting work. Come on up and grab a chair.

3.5. Digest vs. individual messages

The list is set up so subscribers have a choice of how they receive the BBQ List. If someone wants to participate regularly in the discussions, they can subscribe to the regular BBQ List and get individual email messages. If they would rather mainly lurk, and only follow-up occasionally, then the digest will keep their inbox clutter to a minimum. The BBQ List can be a busy place at times, with upwards of a 100 messages or more a day (or 4-5 digests a day). So if you subscribe to the regular list, be prepared for a whole lot of email. As some folks say: 'Happiness is a full email inbox.' You may change from regular to digest forms of the list easily, (or digest to regular)--see Section 3.2 for directions.

3.6. Where can I find the archived digests?

Set your Web browser or FTP program to this URL:

<ftp://ftp.azstarnet.com/pub/users/thead/bbq-digest/>

The digest archives are temporally unavailable. Something to do with the size of the Universe, we think. We suspect the archives are getting so big, they are starting to cramp the very fabric of space and time.

3.7. Where can I find the recipe archives?

Set your Web browser to this URL:
<http://infoest.sbc.edu/barbeque.html>

The recipes posted to the BBQ List by Carey Starzinger are not included in the BBQ List recipe archive. The individual recipes are available from Carey's Web site:
<http://www.teleport.com/~cstarz/>

For downloading all Carey's recipes in one shot, go here:
<ftp://ftp.teleport.com/users/cstarz>

3.8. Are there other barbecue lists?

Yes. There is another list called the 'Barbecue List' started and monitored by Dave Lineback. It is dedicated to traditional barbecuing and grilling over wood fires. To subscribe, send an email message to:

majordomo@ipass.net

in the body of the message put: subscribe barbecue

There is no digest format available for the Barbecue List.

3.9. Is there a newsgroup about barbecue?

Yes. It is called: 'alt.food.barbecue'

It is an open, unmoderated forum for all questions and comments related to barbecue and grilling.

There is also an 'alt.food.barbeque' (spelling difference) newsgroup on some news servers that doesn't seem to have any traffic.

3.10. Confessions of a newbie to barbecue

Rick Otto--

When I first got into finding barbecue information on the Internet, before I began 'lurking' on the BBQ List, I was jumping all over the place, trying one recipe after another, with some successes but a lot more failures. Once I settled down, (and started reading the posts and then asking questions on the BBQ List) and started trying to perfect a dish, things all fell into place. I began with a pork shoulder because I was told it's the most forgiving. Once I had that down, I gained confidence to progress to other dishes. Someone recently stated that the worst BBQ you can do is better than any 'Run-of-the-mill' BBQ in a restaurant. TRUE. I've enjoyed some of my failures. I just wish I could pass some samples to all the experts on this group for a first-hand appraisal.

 [Here's an important question for the list. My wife gets sick of BBQ if we have it 5 nights running. . . Hmmm. What should I do?]

Take her to McDonalds or Burger King on the fourth night and she will be ready for BBQ again.

3.11. How can I get updates and different formats of this FAQ?

- 1) You can read the FAQ on Dan Gill's Barbecue Survival Guide Web page at:
<http://members.tripod.com/~DanGill/Survive.HTML>
- 2) Receive the latest version via an email autoresponder.

Send an email message to: bbq-faq-zip@eaglequest.com
(leave the subject and message body blank)
or check out this Web site:
<http://www.eaglequest.com/~bbq>
- 3) You can also download a copy of the latest version of the FAQ in plain ASCII text, MS Word 6.0 or Adobe Acrobat PDF format via anonymous FTP at this Web site:
<http://www.calweb.com/~ambaker/bbqfaq.html>

4. Tell me about barbecue in general -- The Mini-FAQ

[What is the best way to learn how to barbecue?]

Ed Pawlowski--
Put the engineering books away. This is cooking meat here. There is far more art than science, more alchemy than chemistry. Get some wood, matches, and meat and go to it. You will learn far more by building a fire and watching the results than anyone here can teach you. There is no instruction book on making good barbecue.

[Will the smoke preserve my food?]

Ed--
There are two types of smoking, cold and hot. Cold smoking is a method of preserving meat. First the meat or fish is soaked in a brine solution, then smoked cold at temperatures of 100F or so. Bacon is done this way. Hot smoking is really smoke cooking. It is done at temperatures in the 225F range and will not add any preservation to the foods. This FAQ is devoted to smoke cooking.

[What meats are used?]

Ed--
Beef briskets are favored in Texas, pork shoulders in North Carolina, ribs in Kansas, chicken in Louisiana. Much of the regional favoritism is due to the type of animals raised in the area. Turkey, seafood, lamb, goat and venison can also be smoked in this manner.

[Why cook the meat so long?]

Ed--
Barbecue is an evolution of cooking technique that involves using the tough, cheaper cuts of meat and cooking them until they are tender. Brisket comes from the breast area of a steer that does a lot of work and tends to be very tough. This is also true for pork shoulders (the forelegs of the pig). These cuts of meat have a lot of fat and collagen, the material that holds the muscle together. Long slow cooking

transforms the collagen from a tough material to a gelatin that dissolves. This can take hours at a temperature of about 160F.

[What is a rub?]

Ed--

Often meats are seasoned before cooking by application of a dry rub. It is a blend of spices and herbs rubbed onto the meat to enhance flavor. There are many variations. Most recipes include: salt, paprika, chili powder, garlic and onion powders, black and red peppers. There is no limit to the imaginative use of spice combinations.

[What's the best kind of smoker for me to buy and what will it cost?]

Ed--

You can spend as little as \$30 for a bullet water smoker or tens of thousands of dollars for a custom-built rig. Most of us spend less than \$500. Keep in mind that equipment is only part of the story. A good pit-master can turn out good barbecue on simple homemade units costing a few dollars. Starting out, consider the Brinkmann Cook'N Cajun Charcoal Smoker or similar unit at around \$50, or an off-set firebox smoker that runs about \$200. Once you have mastered those, you will know better what suits your needs.

[Are they all wood-fired? Can I use my gas grill to BBQ?]

Ed--

It is the wood that is used to generate the smoke. That is the common denominator of all barbecue pits. For a heat source, some use charcoal, wood, gas, wood pellets, even electricity. Traditionalists use wood as a fuel, but many of the newer units work well with charcoal. A gas or electric smoker with wood chips for the smoke can do a very good job of making barbecue and be much less labor intensive in keeping the fire at a steady temperature.

The common backyard gas grills are not air tight enough to do proper smoking, but you can still get some flavor by using the wood chips in a pan over the lava rock. Use one burner and keep it as low as possible and put the meat on the other side of the grill, elevated if you have a top rack.

[I've seen some inexpensive bullet water smokers. Are these smokers any good?]

Ed--

There are two main types of BBQ smokers, horizontal and vertical. The horizontal smokers usually have a firebox off-set to the side to provide the heat and smoke. I highly recommend the vertical water smokers to the beginner, especially if you are not sure if this is the way of life for you. They are very capable cookers and can turn out prize-winning food.

There are three basic types of vertical water smokers, segregated by the fuel they use: wood or charcoal, gas, or electricity. All can give the beginner very good barbecue.

Vertical smokers are more compact and can be cheaper to build. A good example is the \$30 Brinkmann Sportsman Smoker, the better \$50 Brinkmann Cook N' Cajun and The H2O Smoker from Char-Broil. Weber makes the best charcoal bullet smoker, The Smokey Mountain Cooker, around \$150. What they have in common is a water pan. This is what differentiates the smoking process over indirect heat from grilling over direct heat. The water pan is a buffer between the heat source and the meat. It also acts as a heat sink and thermal mass, lessening the temperature spikes often seen while adding fuel to the fire.

The original Brinkmann had two pans, one for water, one with a hole in it for the charcoal. Due to someone burning down his deck, they no longer provide the hole in the bottom pan. This restricts the airflow and makes it more difficult to use. See Section 7.2.1 for information on how to modify your bullet smoker to make it work more efficiently and to give you better barbecue.

 [Can you help me get started on my first time with a water smoker?]

Start the coals with a chimney starter and let them burn until a white ash covers the coals. Put the water pan in place. To make clean-up easier, spray it with Pam first and put in a foil liner. Pour in some hot water. I suggest hot (almost boiling) because it will get the food cooking faster instead of wasting the heat output to bring the water up to temperature. To add water during the cooking session, use a long-nose water can or similar item. Open the door, not the lid, and pour. If you are using an electric or gas-fired water smoker, lift the dome lid and pour the water past the meat into the lower water pan. **DO BE CAREFUL WHEN YOU MOVE OR POUR HOT WATER, AS SERIOUS INJURY CAN RESULT FROM UNSAFE HANDLING. FOLLOW THE MANUFACTURER'S SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR YOUR SMOKER.**

It is best to pre-start coals if you must add more than a few. This can be done in a bucket or other pan. Use tongs to transfer the coals to the smoker. If the temperature drops, give the coals a stir with a metal rod. Re-bar and old Studebaker lug wrenches work well for this job.

After you use the smoker a few times, you can experiment. Instead of water, leave the pan empty, but cover it with foil, much as if you were making it into a drum. You will still have the buffer, but the smoker will now operate at a higher temperature. If you have a hole in the center, or place an aluminum pan on the top, it will still catch the drippings from the meat.

You may want to add a more accurate thermometer to your smoker to supplement or replace the simple thermometer that came installed in the dome of your smoker. Most important is knowing your smoker. Note the needle position of the factory gauge and the actual number will not matter; after a few tries, you will know if the temperature is running too hot or too cold. The end result is what counts.

Resist the temptation to peek. You release a lot of heat and smoke every time you lift the lid. You can use wood chips, pellets, or chunks to get the smoke you want. Just put them on top of the burning coals, the gas plate or on/near the electric element. Chunks should be soaked in water for an hour or two before hand so they do not burn up too fast. It only takes a few chunks to turn out good smoked food.

 [Is it really possible to get good barbecue from an inexpensive water smoker?]

Frank Boyer--

There is a gentleman named Harold F. from Oregon who has ten or so Brinkmann water smokers, and he often uses up to four units to compete with. He has won the Oregon state championship, as well as taking first in ribs (open) and brisket (invitational) at the 1994 American Royal Barbecue Championship in Kansas City. The invitational is all-state, comprised of champions or winners of previous cook-offs. There are over 50 cooks competing and the cook-off is KCBS sanctioned. If you learn to use your water smoker, world class results can follow.

The RE Max team at the KCBS of 1995 uses 2 or 3 Weber water smokers and has won many events. The Weber units cost about \$170 and are the highest quality of all of the water smokers, and they have the best air controls.

 [Can I make good BBQ on a gas or electric smoker using chips of wood?]

Danny Gaulden--

I just want to say this. Sometimes we old pros and perfectionists get so carried away with the long, slow, wood-only, "perfect" Q'ed product, that I think we get some of the beginners thinking that if they can't do it that way, then just don't BBQ anything. That's horse hockey. If you have the time, and gain the experience, then do it the old-fashioned way--it can't be beat. But if time is short, your experience level low, or you're just plain lazy, there's nothing wrong with a little faster smoking time, or using a gas or electric pit. It can still be darn good, and better than most anything you will ever put in your mouth.

 [How do I maintain an even temperature inside the smoker?]

Ed--

Regulate the amount of fuel in the fire. Dampening down the burning wood can make the fire smolder and make a heavy bitter smoke. It is better to use less fuel burning at a high temperature rather than a lot of fuel burning at a low temperature. If the temperature gets too high, open the door to release the heat. Short temperature spikes and drops are normal and will not affect the end result.

There are two approaches here. One is the Lazy-Q way, letting an electric or gas-fired system make your life easy. The other way is to have a traditional wood-burning pit. The Lazy-Q'ers are often at odds with the wood purists. Have to say though, the wood burners work harder and develop more skills to make good barbecue. It is more challenging, both mentally and physically to keep a fire in a narrow, low temperature range for a long period of time.

You have to learn to think ahead, not for what the thermometer says now. You have to anticipate. Using a baseball analogy, the batter starts his swing long before the ball is over the plate. He has to figure out where it is going to be and has to be there to meet it. Same with wood; you have to know how long the coals will be hot, how long for the next log to catch, what the wind will be doing, what effect the sun or lack of it will have on the smoker. What works at 2 PM in the afternoon is not going to work at 2 AM the next morning when that brisket is still going.

The sun affects the heat of the smoker. On a 90F day, you have a differential of 135F from optimum cooking temperature. Later that night, you have a 175F differential. At night you'll have no heat absorption of the sun's IR, and a slight breeze may carry off lots of BTUs from the surface of the smoker and you'll have a stronger draft in the flue.

 [What's the best kind of wood to burn and do the different kinds of smoking woods 'taste' different?]

Ed--

The southwest uses a lot of mesquite, the south uses mostly hickory, the northeast has maple. The main reason is because these woods are plentiful in those areas. Any wood from a nut or fruit bearing tree can be used. Do NOT use any softwood. The resin in conifer wood (pine, fir, spruce, etc.) will ruin the meat. There is more information regarding woods for smoking in Section 8.

 [Can you make good barbecue with briquettes and what's the difference between lump charcoal and charcoal briquettes?]

Ed--

Charcoal is made by burning wood in very low oxygen levels. This leaves mostly carbon. In this form, it is known as natural or lump charcoal. It will be of irregularly-shaped pieces of broken-up wood. If you shake the bag, it sounds like the tinkle of broken glass. Briquettes are different. The charcoal is ground into a powder and then additives are introduced. The additives can include starches, coal dust, oil products and other binders. Under high pressure, the ground charcoal and additives are formed to the regular shapes that are familiar to us. The advantage touted by the manufacturers of briquettes is the consistency of the product in heat output and burn rates. Lump charcoal has a higher BTU rating per pound and is preferred by many barbecuers. Never use the easy-light type charcoals for slow cooking.

They have additives that must be burned off at high heat and if used in a smoker will give your barbecued meat nasty flavors.

 [My door mounted thermometer read 220F the whole time but it took a lot longer than I expected for the meat to get done. Why is this?]

Ed--

The thermometer on the door is giving you the temperature at the door. Cooking temperatures are defined as the temperature at the rack where the food is. All smokers have hot and cold spots as well as temperature stratification. Heat rises so the readings at the top can be 50 or more degrees F hotter than at the rack. Use an oven thermometer on the rack to find the difference in your smoker. Keep in mind, the temperature can vary depending to how the pit is loaded with meat, so you will want to try this several times. Once the difference is known, you can make the adjustment by knowing that you have to keep the door thermometer at a certain temperature so the meat cooks at 225F or so.

 [What is a smoke ring?]

Ed--

Smoke rings are produced by a chemical reaction between the meat and the penetration of the smoke. You will see a smoke ring on meat barbecued over a wood fire. It is a pink color that extends from the outside surface into the meat. It's thickness is dependent on several factors, such as the type of smoke and the duration of smoking. See the following section about chicken for a better understanding of the chemical reactions involved.

 [Why is my BBQ chicken pink? Is it still raw?]

Ed--

No, the smoke has a reaction with the chemicals in the bone and meat. The meat turns a pink color even though it is thoroughly cooked. Ash is loaded with potassium and sodium nitrates. This reacts with oxymethyoglobin to form nitrosaminoglobulins and gives us the pink color of hams, lunch meats, hot dogs, and smoke rings.

Man has known this for a long time and has been using salt to preserve meat. It was found that nitrates are a natural impurity in salt. This was isolated and used to chemically cure meat. (Salt peter)

 [When do you use a dry rub and a marinade?]

Ed--

Much depends on your personal choice. A marinade can flavor and tenderize meat if it has a high acid content. A rub only adds flavor. Many barbecuers use a marinade followed by a dry rub.

 [Can you give me a few recipes for dry rubs?]

Ed--

Dry rubs contain some salt along with other spices. Many have sugar in them to take the bite out of the spices. Experiment to find what you like.

Dry Rub for Ribs

Amount	Measure	Ingredient	Preparation Method
-----	-----	-----	-----

6 tablespoons salt
 6 tablespoons sugar
 1 tablespoons dry lemon powder
 2 tablespoons pepper powder
 2 1/2 tablespoons black pepper
 1 tablespoon paprika

This is for sprinkling on spareribs or pork shoulders before you barbecue them. Use heaping measures when you are mixing it and do not skimp when you use it.

=====

Dry Rub for Poultry

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
6	tablespoons	salt
3	tablespoons	black pepper
2	tablespoons	pepper powder
2	tablespoons	garlic powder
2	tablespoons	ground bay leaves
1	tablespoon	paprika
2	tablespoons	dry mustard

Sprinkle this on chicken and turkey before barbecuing.

[Can you give us a recipe for a simple marinade?]

A simple marinade is 8 ounces each of cider vinegar, lemon juice, two ounces of Tabasco and a few cloves of crushed garlic. You can use beer and onions or you can use Dr. Pepper or Coke, or all four together. Another simple marinade is to just combine orange juice or apple juice with beer.

There are many dry rub and marinade recipes in the BBQ List recipe archive.

[When do I apply the BBQ sauce?]

Ed--

Finishing sauces, especially those with tomato and sugar, should be applied only at the very end of cooking. If applied too early, they will caramelize, burn and turn black from the heat.

[What's a mop and when do I use it?]

Mops are basting sauces used to add moisture during the cooking process. They usually contain liquids that can take the heat with no ill affects. They consist of one or more of: beer, wine, beef broth, fruit juices and some spices. Apply them about every hour during cooking.

[How do I BBQ really good tasting and tender pork ribs?]

Ed--

Everybody likes ribs, especially baby backs. On the fat side of the rib there is a membrane over the fat. From one corner, cut it with a knife and work the rest of it with your fingers. Pull it off working to the

other side. You can marinate them or you can put a rub on them. Remember, ribs are thin so you do not want to pile on the rub like you would a large piece of meat. Just a light coating on each side will do.

Fire up the smoker and get it to a temperature of 225 on the grill. If you put them on flat, place them fat side up. If you want to save space, use a rib rack to stand them on end. Smoke baby backs for about 4 hours, spares about 5 hours. You will see the meat pulling back on the bone when they are done. Serve with a little sauce on the side. Opinions vary, but the meat should be the star, not the sauce. Sauces are to accent the taste of the meat.

[How do I BBQ North Carolina-type pulled pork?]

Ed--

True NC pulled pork is a pork shoulder smoked over hickory. You can use either the picnic half or the butt half as it is difficult to find whole shoulders. Each half will weigh about 7 to 8 pounds. Smoke gently (220-240F at meat-grill level) until the meat is very tender. This takes from 8 to 12 hours, keeping the meat at or above 160F. The meat should be ready to fall apart. Pull or chop the meat, putting it into a container. Eastern NC style uses a sauce consisting of cider vinegar, salt, black pepper, and red pepper. Variations include sugar to off-set the vinegar. About 12 ounces of sauce to 6 pounds of finished meat. Mix this together, refrigerate overnight so the flavors meld together and serve on white bread buns, perhaps with coleslaw on the top.

[Can I smoke bacon at home?]

Yes, it is a cold smoking and curing process. An excellent description is on Rick Thead's page for meat preserving. It describes the brining process, gives the cure recipe and the smoking process. Set your Web browser to the following URL:

<http://www.azstarnet.com/~thead/bbq/>

[Can you tell me about what happens to meat while you slow cook it?]

Kit Anderson--

Meats are made of muscle, connective tissue, fat and bone. Muscle contains proteins and glycogen. As the temperature of the meat increases, glycogen, a long chain sugar, is reduced to simple sugars. This caramelizes and is responsible for one of the flavor components.

Proteins (flavorless) are denatured to amino acids, which not only have flavors themselves, but also undergo Maillard browning reactions, which adds another flavor component.

While bone adds no flavor itself, the marrow is rich in methyglobulin and other proteins. This reacts with smoke nitrites to give us the smoke ring. You may have heard that "the sweetest meat is next to the bone". The proteins are reduced to amino acids. Nutrasweet is an amino acid.

Fat is a very simple molecule that fills the fat cells in muscle tissue. Fat breaks down to sugars, fatty acids, and triglycerides at low temperatures.

Collagen is proteins that have lots of side chain bonds. This makes them elastic. It takes more energy to denature them than the simpler proteins of muscle tissue. Energy in the form of heat will denature these proteins into the flavorful amino acids.

If the temperature is too high, the water in the muscle cells and the fat is rendered out before the collagen melts. This results in dry, tough meat. Too low and you risk bacterial activity.

Tough cuts of meat like brisket and pork butts benefit from low temperature cooking as the collagen adds flavor to the meat. Less tough, more expensive cuts do not need this phase and can be cooked at high temperatures for shorter periods. That is why ribs take only a few hours and briskets take 20.

 [Can you help me make some good barbecue on my gas grill? Any good recipes? And can you make barbecue as good as what comes off a wood-fired pit?]

Danny Gauden--

Your "any good recipes to try on my gas grill?" couldn't have been more timely. As a matter of fact, it might be the best way to get started to some excellent barbecuing, for learning to build and maintain the proper wood or charcoal fire, keeping the heat and smoke correct, etc. can be a school of learning in its own right, and is a little overwhelming for a lot of beginners. Sometimes they get discouraged and give up--we don't want that to happen with you. With the gas grill, you can concentrate more on the meat, play with the smoke, have a few cold ones, and the odds with the gas grill will be more in your favor to produce some good stuff the first few times around than with a wood burner. Is it "as good as what comes off a wood fired pit"? Not in my opinion, BUT it's next to it, and better than anything you will ever cook in the kitchen oven, and that's a pretty good start. And it WILL have that great outdoor flavor.

While at my cabin recently, I carried a few things to barbecue, and one of the items was a Boston Butt. Have a little smoker up there, along with a smaller, cheaper gas grill. Intended to smoke the butt on the smoker with charcoal and wood chunks, and didn't take any charcoal, for I thought I had a 20 lb. bag of it up there. Guess what--no charcoal, and the nearest store was about 25 miles down the mountain. So I elected to use the gas grill. It is a two burner with left and right control knobs. I rubbed the butt with some of Willingham's dry rub, let it sit awhile at room temperature (it's cool up there), fired up the left side of the grill on the lowest setting it would go, and put the butt on the right side for an indirect smoking process. The temperature next to the meat stayed at about 250 to 275F, but no burning of the fat cap, or meat occurred. Threw some wet hickory wood chunks (no foil, just raw chunks) onto the lava rock fired side every time one would burn out. I did not use a mop. Cooked the butt with the fat side up for about 4 or 5 hours, then turned it over with the fat side down. About every hour, I would turn the meat with a different side to the fire so it would cook more even. After 8 hours, it was very fork tender through and through, and was a beautiful color. Basted it with my mustard-vinegar-brown sugar glaze a couple of times during the last half hour of smoking. This really turned out great, and was a lot of pure fun to do without a lot of hassle. I did take a lot of attention during the entire cooking time, but had nothing else to do, and enjoyed it. Had a really nice smoke flavor, but I kept a little smoke on it almost constantly.

If you have a Weber Genesis grill, you should be able to achieve a more even heat distribution than I did with my cheap grill, so get to barbecuing, and make some good stuff.

 [Can someone help me with some basic questions about using an electric bullet type water smoker?]

Glenn Birkhimer--

OK. Fire away with the questions.

 [Will an oven thermometer sitting on the rack show an accurate temp?]

Glenn--

I use one on the bottom rack where I can see it when I open the side door. It stays at a steady 235F while the smoker's working. I don't have any fancy Sunbeam or Polder electronic remote so can't attest to accuracy. One problem with putting a thermometer in the pit, is that after awhile smoke will most likely get under the cover and it will become unreadable.

 [Where in the smoker do I put the chips?]

Glenn--

One method is to make up a foil "log" (take some chips and wrap them in aluminum foil and twist them into a log) and place it in the bottom between the "arms" of the heating element. Make sure the foil does not touch the element or your chips will catch on fire. Put some pencil-tip-sized holes in the foil.

Bill Wight--

I have a Char-Broil electric smoker (1650 watts). The best method I've found to date is to put three or four 1" x 2" chunks of mesquite, hickory or pecan right on top of or touching the electric element. The chunks slowly burn for almost two hours and this gives a nice, steady, light-white to invisible smoke and the best tasting end results. As the chunks burn, I turn them over or move them closer to the heating element every 60 minutes or so.

When I first started using my smoker, I took the technique from the SWOCS guys and purchased an 8-inch clay flower pot base and put it right on the electric heating element. Then I put the wood chips in the flower pot base. When heated by the electric element, the chips slowly burned. Jeff Lipsitt has since found that this method ruins the electric heating element--so don't do it.

I next tried tossing a handful of chips right on the electric element--piled them up about 1/2 inch deep off the sheet metal deck below the element. The chips start to catch fire but go out as soon as I set the smoker middle section back over the heating element section. Do not put on too many chips as they will smolder with a thick black smoke that will make your meat black and taste bitter. Sometimes I wet the chips, sometimes not. Doesn't seem to make a big difference in my electric smoker. The chips last about an hour or so and then I add some more. When I first add the chips, I get a lot of dense white smoke and then it tapers off.

I have not seen a smoke ring in the meat smoked in my electric water smoker. Some list members report getting smoke rings in meat smoked in their electric units. One says you need to use more wood smoking chips, another says you need salt containing nitrates in the rub, someone else says it's impossible to get a smoke ring in an electric smoker. The jury's still out on this one.

Rock McNelly--

If the electric bullet is not set up right, it can be difficult to get it up to temperature. The things that effect it the most are:

- 1) Light-weight extension cords. -- Use at least a 12 gauge wire cord. Buy at a hardware store.
- 2) Too many lava rocks to heat up. -- Get rid of them and line the bottom with foil. No lava rocks or ceramic briquettes are needed.
- 3) Way too much water in the pan. -- Use about 2 liters of boiling water.
- 4) Excessive lifting of the lid. -- don't peek. Lift the lid only when necessary to mop, not peek.
- 5) Too much heat escapes around the lid. -- Fill gaps with foil. Make new vents in top of lid that you can open and shut.

[What goal should I aim for in my barbecue? How good is good enough?]

M. Baudoin--

"I've made ribs that make grown men fight and chicken that has made women faint."

(Editor-- Sounds like a pretty fair goal to me.)

5. Hardware--Smokers

 [Do I have to have a very expensive smoking pit to make good barbecue?]

Rodney Leist--

Listen folks. Several of us have been fortunate enough to get new pits (BBQ Pits by Klose) recently. There's been a tremendous number of posts proclaiming the religious experiences and enviable barbecue produced on these pits. Here is something for the newcomers and everyone--it's not the pit that makes good barbecue. Dave Klose and I discussed this a few days ago. He said, and I completely agree, that if you learn to cook good barbecue on whatever you use, whether it's a 55 gal. drum half, an NB, a Brinkmann, a bullet water smoker, or whatever, you've done the hard part and can feel good about what you've accomplished. There's no magic in any Cadillac smokers. They can't make a bad cook a great cook, they can only make a good cook better.

Belly--

"It not the pit, it the pitmaster that makes good barbecue."

Philip F. Wight--

Rodney - I think you've touched on the "secret of the ages" when it comes to barbecue . . . that if you know what you're doing you can turn out just as good a quality barbecue from a \$50 converted oil drum as you can from a \$50,000 BBQ Pit By Klose. The more expensive unit will have bells and whistles to make the work easier but the basic touch has to be there first. I'm told that many outstanding competitors use the bullets and small water cookers to turn out first quality stuff. That's why this list is so important; here we've learned technique as well as recipes, and I've come to believe that it's 90% in the technique.

 [What would you change if you could re-engineer the pit you purchased?]

Scott McDaniel--

I bought a Oklahoma Joe's pit, and the only regret I have is I didn't get a bigger one. My advice: buy more than what you think you need.

 [I was looking at an off-set firebox smoker and it looked plenty big enough to smoke 3 turkeys at once. Is this true?]

Rick Thead--

One thing to keep in mind before you go out and buy too much meat to smoke at once is that the whole area in the smoking chamber isn't usable for smoking long-term. The section nearest the firebox will be too hot to leave the meat for more than a few minutes to an hour or so. I like to start the food near the fire end and then, after getting some browning, move it farther away for the rest of the smoking time.

5.1. Home smokers

 [I hear the term 'off-set firebox smoker pit'. What does that mean?]

Editor--

The wood-burning pit type that most experienced barbecuers will use to do their smoking is called the 'off-set firebox' smoker. This type of pit has three main parts: the firebox, the horizontal smoking chamber, and the exhaust chimney. Some manufacturers add a vertical smoking chamber at the end of the horizontal smoking chamber and the exhaust chimney exits from the top of this vertical chamber.

The firebox is where you make the fire and it is located to one side of the pit, either right or left. It is 'off-set' from the main smoking chamber, or middle part of the pit (where you put the meat). Being off-set, the heat that comes off the fire does not go directly to the food racks (like on a backyard charcoal grill),

but instead travels horizontally past a baffle and into the smoking chamber, ideally under and around the meat on the racks. The heated air and smoke then exit the smoking chamber through the exhaust chimney. Some smokers have the exhaust chimney opening at the top of the smoking chamber, on the end opposite the firebox. Other designs have the exhaust opening in the middle of the opposite end of the smoking chamber.

In the smoking chamber there is at least one meat grill or rack, often several and often at more than at one height, i.e. upper and lower grills. Here is where the real business of smoking meat is done--on the grills. Most backyard off-set firebox smokers can handle a brisket, a chicken and a slab or two of ribs at the same time. Larger pits can hold much more meat and feed larger crowds of people.

Some pits have a vertical smoking chamber at the end of the horizontal chamber, opposite the firebox, that can operate at a lower temperature than in the horizontal chamber. This chamber is used for smoking things like fish, jerky and bacon.

The exhaust chimney is where the smoke exits the pit. It is usually fitted with an adjustable damper. A note of caution here; beginners to smoking should leave this damper wide open while smoking. Experience will let you deepen the amount of finishing smoke flavor by adjusting this damper. Closing the exhaust damper without knowing what you're doing will be the shortest route to ruined barbecue.

[Can you give me some pointers on selecting a barbecue pit?]

Editor--

Selecting a barbecue pit is like buying any other piece of equipment. You need to do some homework and decide a few things before you rush out and buy one. Consider: where will you use it--backyard or porch or apartment? How much do you want to spend--\$30 or \$3000? How much room do you have--four square feet or an acre? How serious are you about barbecue--once a month or every day? How many people do you want to feed when you have a barbecue party--two or a hundred? What kind of weather do you have--hot humid Florida or cold freezing Maine? How much barbecue do you want to do at one time--a few hot dogs or a load of pork shoulders, ribs and a couple of briskets? Do you want to be able to cool-smoke some fish or bacon? Do you want a combination unit--smoker and grill? What level of attention do you want to have to put into your smoking--tending a wood burner every 30-60 minutes or a gas or an electric Lazy-Q unit every few hours or so? How long do you want the smoker unit to last--pass on to your grandchildren or replace it every other year? Do you want a smoker that you can take to the beach or the mountains, or do you want one made out of bricks that forms the focal point of your patio?

When you know the answer to all these question, picking out a smoker will be fairly straight-forward.

David Klose--

Here are a few features you may want to look for when buying a premium grill/smoker, whether it is charcoal, wood, or even gas-fired.

- 1). Ask your retailer if the unit you are interested in is made from all new steel. There are some units out there that are made from used materials and should be avoided.
- 2). Pick the thickest steel unit you can find and afford. The thicker the walls of the pit, the better it will hold in the heat, as well as always cooking more evenly. Quarter inch steel pits last much longer than the sheet metal ones. Look for a pullout ash pan--this will help increase the life of the grill or smoker considerably and make it much easier to load wood or coals.
- 3). Try to buy a smoker that will fit the size of family/group you are normally feeding. A medium-sized pit 18" or 20" diameter by 30" long, will allow large cuts of meat like shoulders and turkeys to be cooked without burning the skin from the hotter top areas of your grill. A 20" diameter by 30" long smoker will hold a brisket or shoulder, two whole chickens, and few hoops of sausage on the bottom shelf, with 3

corn-on-the-cob, 3 baked potatoes, and a slab of ribs on the top half shelf, if one is present. This size will feed the average family/group of 5 to 10, without having to stack the meats and vegetables inside too closely to each other.

- 4). A nice feature in some off-set firebox smokers, is an adjustable meat rack over the fire, for grilling steaks, hamburgers, hot-dogs, fajitas, vegetables and blackening redfish.
- 5). Try to get a unit that has features like adjustable grill heights, and removable meat racks framed in steel angles for extra strength. A large log rack underneath is also helpful for storing wood, charcoal, trays and pans. A steel plate fixed baffle, welded at 45 degrees, between the firebox and main chamber of your smoker will allow you more cooking area, and helps to even out the temperatures from one end of the smoker to the other. A 2-inch high steel plate welded vertically at the bottom of the smoking chamber by the firebox, will allow you to pour water, wine, or juice in the bottom of your smoker to keep the meats moist during cooking. A drain at the end away from the firebox is useful to drain off any drippings and fluids you don't want after cooking. Place a ball valve on the drain for easy cleanup.
- 6). Be sure to inspect the grill or smoker for sharp edges, unwelded corners, sturdy legs and quality wheels. Swivel casters on one end, and large wheels on the heavy end will make moving your grill a more pleasant experience. Be sure the doors are fitted tightly, with a seal that won't warp due to the heat of everyday cooking. Make sure the straps on the edges of the doors are welded completely, and not skip welded, as this can lead to warping.
- 7). Decent handles that don't get hot are a must for any grill or smoker. Wood handles do not last very long outside in the weather. A handle that allows the air to go through it, like a coiled stainless steel handle, are by far the best you can get.
- 8). Make sure your smoker includes a quality stainless steel thermometer that is hermetically sealed, so smoke does not condense inside the dial. It should be mounted at the meat rack level, and not higher up in the center, or on the top of the door, as it is usually 50 to 75 degrees hotter there.
- 9). Look for grills or smokers that have plenty of shelf and table space.
- 10). Be wary of grills that have cheap door hinges or latches, as these will last outside in the weather for only a short time before they rust shut or break off. The doors with a steel bar the full length of the door hinges are better.
- 11). Adjustable controls for air-intake at the firebox are helpful for controlling the inside temperature of your grill or smoker. Ones with the sideways sliding controls will last much longer. An adjustable cap on the smokestack will also be helpful.
- 12). Be sure to ask for any recipe or instruction books that may be included. Also collect any information they may have on accessories for your pit, like covers, charcoal and wood suppliers, cookbooks, cutting boards, seasoning suppliers, and replacement parts for your grill, like racks, etc.
- 13). Deal only with reputable companies, that will be there to answer your questions if a problem should ever arise or you need replacement parts.

The following is a list of popular budget and premium smokers. Descriptions were taken from the manufacturer's literature.

5.1.1. New Braunfels Smokers

5.1.1.1. Universal Water smoker

UNIVERSAL WATER SMOKER #1400. Sug. list \$149.95 354 sq. in. cooking area. Expandable up to 1,770 sq. in. Americas largest water smoker--uses up to ten grills. Smoke pounds of fish fillets or boneless chicken fillets. Has Universal Rack System for hanging rods and multi-level cooking grills. Heavy gauge steel construction with 2 porcelain cooking grills, 1 heavy duty meat hanging rod, enamel water pan, charcoal/wood pan, cool touch stainless steel handles, adjustable air vent and large full-height access door (Temperature gauge not included).

5.1.1.2. Hondo

HONDO Smoke/Grill- #2800 Sug. list \$299.95 732 sq. in. Cooking area-expandable up to 1,708 sq. in. with optional grills. Three porcelain grills are standard. The Hondo has wire front shelves plus the added feature of a welded on hot plate, great for warming side dishes. This unit has an off-set firebox. The street price of the Hondo and black Diamond smokers is \$170-\$200.

5.1.1.3. Black Diamond

BLACK DIAMOND Smoke/Grill #4800 Sug. list \$299.95 732 sq. in. Cooking area expandable up to 1,708 sq. in. with optional grills. Three porcelain cooking grills are standard. This unit has a Malaysian mahogany front shelf, hardwood handles plus the added feature of a welded on hot plate, great for warming side dishes. This unit has an off-set firebox. The Black Diamond is the same unit as the Hondo with a wood vs. a steel shelf.

BLACK DIAMOND Stainless Steel #4848 Sug. list \$449.95 732 sq. in. Cooking area expandable up to 1,708 sq. in. with optional grills. The Black Diamond has Malaysian mahogany front shelf assembly across main chamber, with stainless steel chamber doors, side air baffle and smokestack damper. This unit has an off-set firebox.

5.1.1.4. Luckenback

LUKENBACH Grill #1800. This is primarily a drum-type grill with 488 sq. in. of cooking area. This unit has an easy-access fire door on one end. It has a wood front shelf. It is possible to smoke meat in this unit by building a low fire on one side of the unit. List price is \$199.

5.1.1.5. Guadalupe

GUADALUPE Grill/Smoker #5630 Sug. list \$399.95 Exclusive Multi Draft System 488 sq. in. Cooking area-two porcelain cooking grills. Utilizes dual smokestacks with dampers in both ends and a central divider which offers multi grilling and smoking options. Grill at two heights at same time or totally isolate foods from the fire using the central divider. Features Cool Touch stainless steel door handles, Malaysian mahogany front shelf, louvered air control on side access doors and now with four swivel caster wheels. Dual 4-way adjustable grill heights. Includes two easy clean-up slide out liner/ash trays for extended life. This unit does not have an off-set firebox.

5.1.1.6. Grill Sergeant

GRILL SERGEANT #7500 16 lbs. Sug. list \$39.95 180 sq. in. cooking area. This take along charcoal grill has adjustable smokestack which also locks lid for clean portability. Quick, easy assembly--no tools required. Ideal for picnics, camping, RVs and more.

5.1.1.7. The Boss Grill

THE BOSS Barbeque Center #8400 Sug. list \$149.95 513 sq. in. cooking area. Heavy gauge steel barrel type styling. Adjustable 3-position height fire/grate pan with handles for lift-out cleaning. Hardwood front shelf and large bottom storage rack. Has 4-even flow air damper controls and in-door temperature gauge. Includes: 2 cooking grills and 2 fire grates.

5.1.1.8. Bandera

BANDERA Smoker/Grill #5600 Sug. list \$499.95 1,220 sq. in. Cooking area with four porcelain cooking grills. The Bandera expands up to 4,185 sq. in. using 14 cooking grills in its cooking chamber. Includes: 2 hanging rods, 1 rib rack, porcelain enamel water pan, a Malaysian mahogany front shelf, easy moving casters and wheels, 'Cool Touch' stainless steel handles and easy clean-up, slid-out liner/ash pan for extended life. Temperature gauge is optional. This unit has an off-set firebox with a rectangular vertical smoke chamber.

5.1.1.9. Pecos

The Pecos is a small portable grill smoker with 244 sq. in. of cooking surface. This unit is ideal for apartment dwellers and for taking on trips. List price is \$99.95.

5.1.2. Brinkmann Corporation

5.1.2.1. Sportsman Charcoal Double-Grill Smoker and Grill

Model 815-3060-C - the perfect smoker for a sportsman comes equipped with two cooking grills to handle 50 lbs. of food. Features include wooden handles, a heat indicator and hinged door for adding charcoal and water. Ideal for smoking wild game or grilling hamburgers. List Price: \$69.95. Street Price about \$30.

5.1.2.2. Cook'N Carry Smoker/Grill

Model 810-5030-0 - This compact, single-grill charcoal smoker has a double-latched lid for carrying to your camp or picnic site. Use as a water smoker or a barbecue grill. Great for camping, tailgate parties and picnics. List Price: \$39.95.

5.1.2.3. Cook'N Cajun Charcoal Double-Grill and Smoker

Model 850-7000-1 - Our top-of-the-line double-grill charcoal smoker has a 50 lb. capacity. Smoker body lifts off base for easy access to an extra-large charcoal pan. Features heat indicator in dome lid handle, extra-large porcelain-coated steel water pan and Nylon handles. Converts to a waist-high or portable grill. List Price \$89.98. Street Price about \$45-50.

5.1.2.4. Smoke'N Grill Stainless Steel Charcoal Smoker

Model 810-5305-S - This strikingly beautiful stainless steel smoker cooks as good as it looks. Double grills handle up to 50 lbs. of food. Features include stainless steel body and dome lid, heat indicator, wooden handles, porcelain-coated water pan and charcoal pans, and hinged door for adding charcoal and water. Converts to electric model. List Price: \$169.95.

5.1.2.5. Smoke'N Grill Electric Double-Grill Smoker

Model 810-5290-C - Double-grill 1500-watt smoker handles up to 50 lbs. of food. Converts in seconds to a barbecue grill. Wooden handles stay cool. Water pan and lava rocks included. List Price 139.95. Street price about \$70 (Editor--This unit does not have an adjustable heat control for the electric element, a desirable feature.)

Brinkmann also sells a Gourmet Electric Smoker model that is similar to the Smoke'N Grill Electric but is taller. Street price is less than \$90.

5.1.2.6. Smoke'N Grill Gas Double-Grill Smoker

Model 810-5600-0 - Double-grill design provides two cooking surfaces that handle up to 50 lbs. of food. The middle section is removable for easy conversion to a gas grill. Equipped with lava rocks, 18,000 BTU gas burner, LP gas hose and regulator. Features Piezo quartz ignition system for matchless starts. List Price 169.95. Street price about \$100.

5.1.2.7. Smoke'N Pit Professional Horizontal Smoker

Model 805-2101-1 - This large capacity horizontal charcoal/wood smoker incorporates a separate fire box, a design favored by many smoke cooking enthusiasts. A wood or charcoal fire is built inside the fire box for indirect heating. Features include heavy-gauge sheet metal steel, heavy-duty hinged lid, three

adjustable cooking levels, wooden cooking shelf, molded wheels and wood storage rack. List Price: \$379.95 Street Price about \$170-\$199.

5.1.2.8. Smoke'N Pit Pitmaster Horizontal Smoker & Grill

Model 805-2101 - The Pitmaster is similar to the Professional, but does not feature a separate fire box. For indirect cooking, a charcoal or wood fire is built on the left side of the cooking chamber and food is placed on the right side of the cooking chamber. There is a kit to convert this unit into a professional model. List Price: \$229.95. Street Price about \$100.

5.1.3. SnP Pro vs. the NBBB and Hondo

 [What is the difference between the Brinkmann Smoke'N Pit Professional and the New Braunfels Black Diamond/Hondo?]

David A. Rogers--

Features

The Hondo (read also Black Diamond) has a heating shelf over the firebox - the SnP Pro doesn't. That's the only feature of difference.

Construction

The Hondo is made with a circumferential weld on both ends of both barrels. i.e. looking at the end of a Hondo, the barrel is welded all the way around. The Brinkmann is welded on the bottom third with three or four additional spot welds.

The Hondo has a wimpy wire front shelf. The SnP Pro has a wood shelf. Editor--The Black Diamond model has a sturdy wood shelf.

The lid on the SnP Pro rests against an angle bracket welded to the barrel for that purpose. On the Hondo, the lid rests against the smokestack.

Tom Kelly--the SnP Pro stack has been modified since David's post to correct a potential safety problem. A bend was added so the lid would open further. Apparently, the previous position allowed the wind to blow the door closed onto your hands, tools, etc. In the new design, the lid rests against the smokestack, just like the Hondo/NBBB

Both units are made out of the same gauge heavy-gauge sheet metal, about 3/32-inch thick.

Design

The SnP Pro has brackets to support the grills in the smoke chamber at grilling height. On the Hondo you can turn the grills 90 degrees to get them a little higher (they're rectangles).

Tom Kelly-

The grills on the SnP Pro are located MUCH higher than in the NBBB/Hondo. I measured the grill-to-door opening height and it was about 7-1/2 inches in the SnP Pro. This would be tight for a big turkey. The Hondo/NBBB grills sit several inches lower and thereby have more head room.

Editor--

The smokestack on the Hondo is attached by a bolted flange and extends further into the smoke chamber than on the SnP Pro.

List members report that the legs and wheels of both units are not as strong as they should be. Care must be taken when moving these units over rough ground and lawns.

Neither design is perfect. Some BBQ List members have reported great success with their Hondo/NBBD and SnP Pro right out of the box. Other members have reported big internal temperature variations, leaking air and smoke from doors and have made modifications to correct these problems. The biggest complaint seems to be that the heat from the firebox on these units flows up and into the top of the smoking chamber and along the top of the chamber and out the exhaust stack, bypassing the meat on the racks below, and causing high temperature variations within the pit. The modifications suggested keep the heat and smoke lower in the smoking chamber. The most ambitious of the changes brings the heat up from under the meat rack and gives the best results. See Section 7.2.2 for modifications on making your Hondo/NBBD/SnP Pro more efficient.

5.1.4. BBQ Pits by Klose

From their Web site: <http://www.bbqpits.com>

BBQ Pits by Klose was founded in 1986 with the principle of maintaining an integrity of the Old Western trail drive style of cooking in mind. BBQ Pits by Klose is a purveyor of custom BBQ grills, smokers, cook-off and catering rigs. The sizes range anywhere between a \$69 drum grill to a \$400,000 catering rig.

All BBQ Pits are made by hand, with no machinery involved in the manufacturing process except a welding machine, in the spirit of the old style iron foundries. One welder to one pit from the beginning to the finished product. Handmade all the way.

Here are a few models in the Klose Backyard Chef(R) line:

18" Diameter by 24" Long Smoker--Round firebox List Price \$595

Here we have an 18" diameter by 24" long smoker with an 18" round firebox. It has stainless steel air-cooled handles and an easy to read 3" dial, stainless steel thermometer, hermetically sealed. There is a 10" wide by 30" long table on the front, with a 10" wide by 18" long table on the side, making an "L" shaped table. Additional storage space underneath with an 18" wide by 42" long log rack. The main area has a full meat rack framed in steel angles for strength, as well as a removable 1/2 shelf. This smoker features adjustable firebox and smokestack controls. CAPACITY: 624 sq. inches in smoker, and 324 sq. in. in the firebox.

18" Diameter by 30" Long Smoker--Square firebox List Price \$650

Here we have an 18" diameter by 30" long smoker with an 18" by 18" square firebox. Air-cooled stainless steel handles, an easy to read 3" dial, stainless steel thermometer. There is a 10" wide by 40" long table on the front, with a 10" wide by 18" table on the side, making an "L" shaped table. Additional storage & shelf space underneath with an 18" by 30" long log rack. The main cooking area has a full meat rack framed in steel angles for strength, as well as a removable 1/2 shelf. This smoker has adjustable firebox and smokestack controls, as well as adjustable grilling heights on the firebox to 5 levels. CAPACITY: 780 square inches in smoker, & 324 square inches in firebox.

20" Diameter by 30" Long Smoker List Price \$675

This backyard unit is one of the all-time favorites to take to the beach or for family reunions.

It's 20" in diameter by 30" long, with a 20" by 20" square firebox and 1/4" thick new steel to maintain even heat. Ideal for grilling and smoking. Air-cooled stainless steel handles and easy-to-read. 3" dial, stainless steel thermometer.

It comes with plenty of table space outside, as well as storage space underneath for your charcoal and woods. It has 840 square inches of cooking area in the smoker, as well as 400 square inches of grilling area in the firebox. Large enough for a brisket, a turkey, ribs, sausage, corn-on-the-cob, and baked potatoes. It has adjustable height to five levels in the firebox for grilling fajitas, shrimp, blackened redfish and steaks.

20" Diameter by 42" Long Smoker List Price \$775

This backyard unit is one of the all-time favorites to take to the beach or for family reunions.

It's 20" in diameter by 42" long, with a 20" by 20" square firebox and 1/4" thick new steel to maintain even heat. It's ideal for grilling and smoking.

It comes with plenty of table space outside, as well as storage space underneath for your charcoal and woods. It has 1218 square inches of cooking area. Large enough to hold up to 3 briskets, a turkey, ribs, sausage, corn-on-the-cob, and baked potatoes. It has adjustable height to five levels in the firebox for grilling fajitas, shrimp, blackened redfish and steaks.

20" Diameter by 40" Long Smoker List Price \$1075

A 20"x40" main chamber, with a full meat-rack and 1/2 shelf. The 20"x20" square firebox has an adjustable grill and fire-grate. There is a pull-out ash pan for easy clean out. Lifetime Burn-through Guarantee.

Adjustable controls on the firebox and smokestack. Also featured is a 20"x20" upright slow-smoker with 3 shelves and hanging rods. There is a full log rack underneath and wrap-around tables, dual stainless steel handles and two thermometers. Cooking capacity: 2320 square inches.

On all BBQ Pits by Klose--A Lifetime warranty on burn-through and rust-through. Klose pits feature heavy-wall construction that makes temperature control much easier than the mass-produced units sold by other manufacturers.

5.1.5. Oklahoma Joe's Pits

From their Web site at:

<http://www.oklahomajoes.com/page24/index.htm>

Their line of backyard off-set firebox models include:

"Grill With Firebox"

Utilizing the off-set firebox design concept, the Grill with Firebox features a long horizontal cooking chamber with plenty of room for your favorite smoked meats! Keep a pot of beans or soup warm on the flat top of the firebox. This model has the same unique baffling and damper system found on our smokers. Designed with grilling and barbecuing in mind, these models are relatively compact and mobile--perfect for the backyard cookout. The grill with firebox is available in 16" and 20" sizes. Get those fires going with our LP log lighter system (also available).

16" Grill #16-GWFB \$799.00

20" Grill #20-GWFB \$1,069.00

"Tailgator"

The Tailgator is the smallest in the Oklahoma Joe's line, and is modeled after the Grill with Firebox, but it is much smaller. It is made to travel and is very affordable. The 12" model has 3 square feet of grilling

area. Need a little more cooking area? The 14" model has 4 square feet of grilling area. The Tailgator is great to take to lake, or to football games or to just keep at home for the family to enjoy.

12" Tailgator #12-TAIL \$329.00

14" Tailgator #14-TAIL \$399.00

"The Oklahoma Tradition"

This cooker has become a #1 seller and shows the tradition and quality of Oklahoma Joe's. Available in 14" and 16" sizes. Due to the off-set firebox design, the tradition is the ultimate in versatility for grilling, barbecuing and smoking. Because of its steel construction, the Tradition burns wood and charcoal longer than ordinary thin-walled units. And in the tradition of Oklahoma Joe's, this model comes with a limited lifetime warranty.

14" Tradition #14-OKTKD \$439.00

16" Tradition #16-OKTKD \$589.00

Their line of backyard vertical smokers include:

"The Chuckwagon"

The Chuckwagon has the ultimate vertical smoking chamber. With four shelves to smoke on, you can smoke almost all of your favorite meats at the same time. Similar to the smokers in design, the Chuckwagon has 4 extra inches in the firebox so it will handle any wood you buy at your local wood yard. The wagon wheels give this smoker a western flair and roll easily over rough surfaces. Editor--This is a combination smoker with horizontal and vertical smoking chambers.

16" Chuckwagon #16-CW \$1,149.00

20" Chuckwagon #20-CW \$1,499.00

"Smoker"

This model is great for taking your time and smoking all day long. Available in 16" and 20" sizes, our smokers feature triple cooking areas (grilling, barbecuing and vertical slow smoking). All Oklahoma Joe's smokers have a flat grill top that is perfect for the bean pot, OKJ's Bar-B-Q sauce or a bread and tortilla warmer. Editor--This model is a smoker with horizontal and vertical smoking chambers.

16" Smoker #16-SMOKE \$1049.00

20" Smoker #20-SMOKE \$1329.00

Oklahoma Joe's pits feature heavy-walled construction that makes temperature control much easier than the mass-produced units sold by other manufacturers.

5.1.6. Weber Grills

See their Web page at: <http://www.webergrills.com>

Weber makes a line of premium grills and a bullet-type smoker.

Smokey Mountain Cooker (TM)

Porcelain-on-steel Smoker has two heavy, bright nickel-plated 18 1/2" cooking grates, aluminum door and legs, and packed with a premium grade cover. This is the premium bullet water smoker.

Model 2890 18 1/2" Black \$179.99

Other Weber grills can be used for smoking, but they are primarily for grilling.

5.1.7. Char-Broil

H2O Smoker

A basic bullet water smoker that uses charcoal for fuel. Features include heat-resistant handles, two pans, one for water, one for charcoal, double grills, a hood-mounted temperature indicator and hinged door for adding charcoal and water. Street price often below \$30.

Electric Water Smoker

This unit has a 1650 watt electric water smoker. It has an infinite control heating element, multiple cooking surfaces, 6 quart water pan, hood-mounted heat indicator and smoker cookbook. It converts to electric table top grill, UL approved. Holds up to 50 pounds of food at a time. The smoker section lifts off the base section allowing for full access to heating element for adding wood chips/chunks and cleaning.

Model 4512 - Electric Water Smoker, Suggested List Price \$88.50 Street Price \$40-70

5.1.8. Cookshack Ovens

From their Web site at: <http://www.cookshack.com/>

What in the world is Cookshack?

We're a company dedicated to the manufacture of electric smoker ovens for genuine pit barbecue and wood-smoked foods. A leader in the market for over 30 years, Cookshack's state-of-the-art ovens are distributed worldwide to restaurants, caterers, supermarkets, convenience stores, meat markets--in fact, to all sorts of retail food service operations.

Editor-- The Cookshack smokers are vertical, rectangular, insulated smoker-oven units.

They manufacture a line of premium vertical smoker ovens in various sizes. They have two home smoker models: the Smokette II, suggested list price \$425, and the "Model 50", suggested list price \$895. They are used by everyone from backyard cooks to chefs.

5.2. Homemade pits This section under construction

5.3. Brick and block pits

[I want to build my own backyard barbecue pit from bricks or concrete blocks. Where can I get plans to do this?]

Rock McNelly--

Try finding a book by Sunset Publishing called, "Barbecue Building Book." ISBN 0-376-01042-8. In it you'll find ideas and plans for indoor and outdoor barbecues. Everything from simple one-grate on-the-ground grills, to elaborate above-ground grill, oven, and smoker combos. There's even plans for an in-ground pit capable of feeding 600 people. This has been the most informative book that I've found yet.

Of course, if you build it . . . We will come!

6. Hardware--accessories

6.1. Thermometers

[Do I really need a thermometer in my smoker?]

Tom Kelly--

Unless you're one of the real pro's out there, you need a thermometer. Even if you have one of those Brinkmann "COLD-IDEAL-HOT" indicators, you need to know what temperature it's really indicating.

Also, if you have a thermometer that's not at grill level, you need to know how close it reads to an accurate thermometer placed at the grill level so you can use your installed thermometer as a guide.

You have a lot of choices here. Thermometers range from \$3 home oven types to \$30 or more dial indicator or digital remote reading units. You'll have to decide what's best for you. Here's some information to help you make that choice:

Oven Thermometer - These \$3 or so units will work fine. You can get them at K-Mart, WalMart, Roses or stores that carry kitchen accessories. Sit it on the grill and smoke away. The two big drawbacks are, 1) you have to raise the lid to check the temperature (and that causes heat loss) and 2) you have to clean the face of it just about every time you use it use because the smoke will totally coat the face. Also, over time, the smoke products can muck up the spring mechanism (through the small holes in the back) so plan on buying a new one after a few years, depending on the amount of use.

Built-in Thermometer - These dial indicator thermometers are available for about \$30. Brinkmann and New Braunfels make them to fit the threaded hole in the cooking chamber lid. They have a range of about 50 to 500F. The element (probe) is inside the smoke chamber and the dial is outside so you don't have to open the unit to check the temperature and the face and mechanism don't see the smoke. The only problem may be the placement of the thermometer. On the Brinkmann SnP Pro and the NBBB and Hondo units, the thermometer is 4 to 8 inches above the grill level so the indicated temperature may read as much as 60F higher than the grill temperature. Several other instrument companies also make dial indicator thermometers and some are available on the Internet.

Remote-Reading Thermometer - Sunbeam and Polder both make very nice remote-reading thermometers for about \$30. Service Merchandise carries the Sunbeam and both should be available at better kitchen stores. You can buy the Polder unit over the Internet from Cunningham Gas products. These electronic units have a 4 or 5 inch probe which can be placed in the smoker. A metal braid shielded wire runs from the probe to an LCD readout placed outside the chamber. The probe can be positioned anywhere within the smoker to obtain a fast and accurate temperature indication. These units are excellent for 'calibrating' your installed dial indicator thermometer because it shows the difference between the grill level and the dial indicator location.

Other - Some folks have reported that a candy thermometer, poked through the center of a cork that fits a hole into the cook chamber works fine. There are probably lots of alternate solutions.

[Which digital thermometer is best, Sunbeam or Polder?]

Dan Gill--

I received my Polder digital thermometers from Jeff today - they appear to be really nice units. Since I also have 2 Sunbeams, I thought the list members may be interested in my first impressions.

I was a little worried when I first unpacked the Polders, put in the battery and then plugged in the probe--display continued to read "LO F no matter what I did--I even switched probes with a Sunbeam--still no reading. When I removed and replaced the battery with the probe connected, the unit initialized and read fine.

The Polder appears to be built and designed better than the Sunbeam - I like the swing-up display on the magnetic base. The disadvantage is that the battery and circuitry are in the magnetic base and could be damaged by prolonged attachment to hot surfaces. I melted the magnetic base on one of my Sunbeams by leaving it on the cast iron cooker door when I had a hot fire.

Functionally, both units are very similar. The Sunbeam does have a clock function. The timer on both units continues to run after time elapses. On the Sunbeam the alarm sounds for one minute and the display shows elapsed time. The Polder alarm keeps sounding until reset. You can also set seconds on the Sunbeam. The probes appear to be identical and are interchangeable - therefore I would expect the

same immersion problems. I use mine in liquids all of the time and just avoid immersing the top of the probe where the wire enters.

Both units are excellent values and extremely handy and functional.

Rock--

I have the Perfect Temp by Charcoal Companion, and as far as I can tell, it's identical to the Polder in every way except for brand name. I bought mine from the Barbecue Store on the Internet. It works just great!

Scott--

I've got both the Polder and the Charcoal Companion (don't know if that's a Sunbeam or not) and I can't tell a bit of difference other than the Charcoal Companion has different printed instructions, like maybe Polder sells the thermometers to the company and then they print their own instructions (and the Polders are white while the CCs are black). Even came with the same brand of battery (El Cheapo Hong Kong Industrial Grade Alkaline, guaranteed to last nearly 2.3 minutes). Probes are the same length, display is identical down to the size and placement of numbers. They were also priced identically - \$29.95.

6.1.1. Pros and cons of thermometers

The old-timers on the List don't use thermometers and say they are not needed. Beginners seem to want and need them. Seems that once you're an old-hand at barbecue, then you can tell the temperature by the color of the smoke, the smell of the pit or by some extra-sensory thing. But until you get to that point, a thermometer somewhere in the pit is an absolute necessity.

6.1.2. Where should I measure the temperature?

[Just where do I stick it?]

Editor--A summary of several posts--

Remember, the important place to measure the temperature in the pit is at the meat. This is also not the easiest place to measure the temperature. Most pits come with a thermometer in the lid, whether it's a bullet smoker or an off-set-firebox smoker. The temperature measured at this point, in the lid, will be 50-70F higher than at the meat cooking rack. If your pit has upper and lower racks, the top rack will be 20-50F higher than the lower rack. None of these things is a big problem once you learn your pit. For the beginner, we suggest that you equip your pit with a good analog thermometer in the dome or lid. A candy thermometer works well (you need a range of about 150F to 350F). Use this thermometer to monitor and control the temperature inside your pit. A digital meat thermometer that you can poke into the meat is well worth the investment of \$20-\$30. Once you understand the temperature profiles within your pit, then you can stop using the digital thermometer and rely on the one in the dome. Also remember that in your horizontal smoker (SnP Pro, NBBB, Klose, OKJ's, etc.) the temperature at the meat rack will be highest near the firebox and coolest at the opposite end. You can take advantage of this by starting your meat near the firebox and moving it farther away after the first hour or so.

Like we've said before, you've got to put some heat to the meat and experiment with your pit to get good at doing barbecue. Nothing beats experience. A whole chicken costs about \$5 and is a good way to begin working with your pit. You're not going to go bankrupt if you ruin a few chickens and chances are you won't ruin any. See Section 10.3.3 on how to prepare the chicken before it goes into the pit.

6.2. Tools

[What kinds of tools are handy for barbecuing?]

Tom Kelly--

RIB RACKS - If you have a small bullet water smoker, you might want to consider a rib rack. These racks allow you to stand a rack or slab of ribs on edge, instead of laying them flat, thus freeing up valuable grill space. They are available at barbecue stores, some home centers, better kitchen stores and restaurant supply houses.

UTENSILS - A set of long barbecue tongs are indispensable for picking up meats, especially ribs, when they are repositioned to account for uneven temperatures in the smoker or when you're ready to pull them off and chow down. They are also useful for messing with the fire and for adding chunks of wood or charcoal to the firebox. A large fork or spatula is also handy for checking doneness and transferring the cooked meat to a serving platter or to a roasting pan for covered cooking.

SPRAY BOTTLE - Nope, not for putting out grease fires! A spray bottle is ideal for applying thin mops, such as apple juice, beer or soda, which do not contain ingredients that would stop up the sprayer nozzle.

DRIP PANS - These accessories come in many shapes, sizes and materials. The bottom line is that a drip pan, placed under the meat, can help keep your cleanup requirements to a minimum. Instead of washing out the smoke chamber, you simply clean out the drip pan. For even easier cleanup, line the pan with aluminum foil and just fold up and throw away the foil after smoking.

COOKING PANS - A nice aluminum, stainless steel or porcelain roasting pan is a handy smoking item but be aware, it'll turn black over time!. Many folks like to finish their product in a covered pan, either in

the smoker or in the oven. A shallow roasting pan, covered with aluminum foil, works great for this purpose.

WATERING CAN or FUNNEL - Many of the bullet water smokers have horrible access to the water pan. Refilling the water pan can be dangerous and difficult. A long, flexible funnel or a gardener's watering can makes replenishing the water pan a breeze.

CHIMNEY STARTER - This is one of the most indispensable items for anyone using lump charcoal or briquettes. They are available at home centers (Lowe's, Home Depot, HQ, etc.) for \$4 to \$10. Basically, it is an open metal cylinder with a grate near one end. You fill it with fuel which sits on the grate, crumple up newspaper underneath the grating and light it. In 15 - 30 minutes, you are ready to pour the contents into your firebox or firepan and get to smoking.

COOLER - A standard insulated chest or food/drink cooler, size determined by your needs, is an invaluable tool for barbecuing. Often, the meat, particularly brisket, is removed from the smoker, wrapped in several layers of foil, and placed in a cooler. This 'resting' period continues the cooking process (without you having to tend the pit and burn fuel) and tenderizes the meat further while holding in heat. A brisket can be safely kept in a cooler if it's wrapped in towels for additional insulation for 6-7 hours prior to serving. Remember, meat must be kept at a temperature above 140F for safe storage.

BEER HOLDER - Self explanatory. You or anything else that keeps your beer handy and cool while you slave over the smoker.

BASTING BRUSH or MOP - You should have one of each. Both should have long handles. A mop is used for thinner sauces and a basting brush for thicker ones and for honey, butter and oils. These are available in barbecue stores, kitchen shops, supermarkets and discount stores. They are available from \$2 to \$9.

WATER CAN - Some people who have off-set firebox smokers like to have some added humidity to the smoke, just like the bullet smoker people get. To accomplish this, an old coffee can (paint burned off) set in the firebox will do the trick. Alternatively, a small loaf pan, filled with water and set in the smoke chamber in front of the firebox opening has basically the same effect.

FOOD GLOVES - When handling the meat, particularly after smoking, a nice pair of rubber gloves is handy. Helps keep the meat clean and also helps keep from burning your hands if the meat is too hot.

CHICKEN RACK - A chicken rack is available at barbecue stores, better kitchen stores and at some home centers. Some consist of a pan with a center cone attached to the pan while others are fabricated from a wire frame. In either case, the chicken sits upright. On the cone type, the hot air and smoke can get to the inside of the bird as well as the outside. It is also supposed to save some space if you have a small cooking surface, depending on the size of the rack's footprint.

JACQUARD - This item is available only at specialty kitchen stores and kitchen item suppliers. It consists of a row of tiny blades (as few as 9 or as many as 36) which are used to tenderize the meat. This tool is plunged into the meat many times and it cuts the fibers. Probably not an item required for the backyard chef.

INSULATION - If you smoke in a cold climate, you might consider insulating your smoke chamber. Brinkmann makes a "Smoking Jacket" for some of its smokers. A water heater blanket may work just as well but be sure there are no combustible materials adjacent to the chamber. A piping system insulation manufacturer would also have a suitable product. **WARNING: IF YOU INSULATE, MAKE CERTAIN THAT THE MATERIAL IS ENCLOSED AND CANNOT ESCAPE ONTO YOUR FOOD AND THAT IT WILL WITHSTAND THE TEMPERATURES YOU EXPECT ON YOUR UNIT.**

CHIP BOX - These small metal boxes are designed to hold wood chips. The box is placed on a bed of coals or just above an electric or gas element and produces smoke.

7. Tell Me About Using Smokers

7.1. Most common mistakes made by beginners

 [Can you tell me some of the most common mistakes beginners make?]

Editor--A summary of several posts--

- Getting in too big of a hurry. Barbecue takes time and patience. You can't rush it. Figure 1 to 1 1/2 hours per pound for most meats. If you're tending a wood-burning pit, figure on checking it out every 30-60 minutes.
- It helps to be a semi-good cook in the kitchen before you get into barbecue. If you can't boil water, let someone else do the barbecuing. I'll bet that almost all the old hats here were pretty decent cooks in the kitchen before they learned to grill and barbecue.
- Opening the lid to peek too often. This lets out the heat and the pit will be below temperature. Open the lid only when necessary to mop or move or turn the meat. The meat's not going anywhere, so you don't need to keep checking up on it.
- Trying to do a brisket or spare ribs the first time you use your pit. Start off on the road to "Perfect Q" with the simplest meat to smoke--a whole chicken or a pork picnic roast. They're cheap and hard to ruin. Don't fill up the pit with meat until you've had some successes. Start with just one item.
- Using lighter fluid to start your charcoal briquettes. This can give you some really awful odors and tastes in your smoked meat. Use a chimney starter for charcoal.
- In a wood burning pit, making the fire too big and closing the inlets and exhaust dampers to control the flame. This is a no no. Open that exhaust damper all the way. Regulate the oxygen intake with the inlet damper. Be careful how you close that inlet damper--your fire can smolder and give you some nasty-tasting smoke. Best advice--keep your fire low and your dampers open.
- Using green wood. You must use seasoned wood to get good results when you begin barbecuing. The old pros can use a mix of green and seasoned wood, but beginners should not use the green stuff until they know about fire and temperature control. Using green wood without knowing what you're doing is the surest way to ruin the meat. You'll get creosote and that will make bitter meat that cannot be saved.
- Trying to adjust too many things at once. Don't adjust everything on the pit at once. Change one thing, see what happens, then change another.
- Changing things too much at once. Make small changes to the pit. Open or close the intake vent a little bit, not a lot. If you are continually making big changes, you will continually overshoot the correct temperature point. Your temperature curve will look like a giant sawtooth. Make the changes in small increments.
- Putting cold meat into the smoker. This can lead to the condensation of creosote on the surface of the meat. Always allow the meat to come to room temperature, about an hour, before you put it in the smoker.

- Don't invite the family, the in-laws, and the preacher and his wife over the first day you get that new smoker pit. Practice some, get to know your pit on a personal basis. Do a pork shoulder, some chickens, then some ribs and finally when everything's coming together, do a brisket. Then invite the whole gang over and wow 'em good.

- Trying to learn to barbecue without reading this FAQ and subscribing to the Thead BBQ List. Ruin good meat every time. I was lucky, I discovered this list before I started to barbecue. My very first try (pork picnic shoulder) was a great success. After nine months on the BBQ List and barbecuing in my backyard, I can make some pretty good barbecue. I'm no Danny, Belly or Ed, but the people who have tried my barbecue say it's the best they ever had. They'll be saying that about your barbecue too.

7.2. Smoker modifications

7.2.1. Modifying charcoal-burning bullet water-type smokers

The pit modification Section was edited by Tom Kelly from a summary of posts by Mike Roberts, Pat Lehnerr, Harry Jiles and The Bear--

The Brinkmann water smoker is an inexpensive tool which can make some excellent barbecue. It is sometimes referred to as an ECB on this mail list (El Cheapo Brinkmann). Don't let this moniker fool you however. The ECB makes some mighty fine BBQ right out of the box. However, there are several modifications which can improve its performance, ease its use and therefore enhance your enjoyment.

Modification 1 - Improve accessibility to the firepan.

WHY? - The small door on the side of the Brinkmann does not allow for easy access to the firepan. Adding wood, lump charcoal or briquettes is a hit or miss prospect. Try throwing in a few preburned Kingsford briquettes and you'll see what I mean. This modification makes fire maintenance a snap.

HOW? - Remove the legs from the unit and install them on the outside. Obtain a length of ungalvanized threaded rod and six matching nuts. Alternately, obtain 3 bolts of sufficient length and 6 matching nuts. Drill through the lip of the firepan at three locations approximately 120 degrees apart. Center the hole between the inside and outside diameter of the lip making sure that the nuts can be installed without interfering with the pan. Measure from the ground up to the ledge on the legs that the firepan used to sit on. Cut three pieces of threaded rod about 1 inch longer than this measurement or use your 3 bolts in an inverted position. Now all you do is thread on a nut above and below the lip of the pan to secure it in place at the same height it used to sit. Set the Brinkmann smoker over the pan and you are ready to smoke.

Starting a fire and maintaining it is now much easier. When you have to add fuel or 'shake up' the fire or remove ash, all you have to do is CAREFULLY lift the unit straight up about 6 inches and set it aside. You have to be particularly careful if you have water in your water pan. Tend to the fire and then replace the main unit. The top is never removed and the door is not opened so less heat is lost.

Modification 2 - Improve firepan airflow

WHY? - The Brinkmann firepan has no air holes to improve combustion of the fuel. It apparently used to but rumor has it that someone used the smoker on a deck and some hot embers dropped out and set the deck on fire. Ergo, no more holes. But, no holes means poor combustion and incomplete burning. This modification lets more air get to the fire.

HOW? - Take the firepan and drill about five 3/8-inch holes in the bottom of the pan. This will give you about 1/2 square inches of airflow area. This increased airflow allows for better combustion.

Another advantage of this modification (assuming you have made modification number 1) is that you can lift off the main unit and using fire gloves or a couple pairs of pliers, pick up the firepan and shake it. This gets rid of much of the ash and keeps the holes free for air supply.

CAUTION - CAUTION - CAUTION ----- DO NOT USE THIS MODIFIED UNIT ON ANY COMBUSTIBLE SURFACE (Such as a wood deck). If you plan on using this on a deck, make sure that the unit is placed in a sand-filled tray or similar fire resistant arrangement.

Modification 3 - Improve accessibility to the water pan

WHY? - The small door on the side of the Brinkmann does not lend itself to easily refilling the water pan. Adding water is a hit or miss prospect and can end up with water spilling into the firepan.

HOW? - Technically this is not a mod but more of a tip. Run down to your local K-Mart or auto parts store and purchase a plastic funnel with a long flexible filling end. Then, adding water is a snap. Open the door, hold the funnel end over the pan and fill with water safely from the other end.

CAUTION - CAUTION - CAUTION ----- ADD WATER CAREFULLY! IF THE WATER HAS COMPLETELY BOILED OFF, ADD WATER VERY SLOWLY TO AVOID BEING BURNED. THE WATER CAN FLASH TO STEAM OR BOIL VIGOROUSLY IF ADDED TO A VERY HOT, DRY WATER PAN.

Modification 4 - Improve temperature indication

WHY? - The temperature gauge that comes as standard equipment with the Brinkmann leaves a bit to be desired. The 'LOW, IDEAL, HIGH' indication doesn't really tell you what's going on temperature wise. You'll be hard pressed to maintain 220F using the stock gauge.

HOW? - Obtain a good quality candy or meat thermometer (temperature range about 150-350F) that has a shaft at least 4 inches long. Obtain two matching corks, each about 4 times the diameter of the thermometer shaft. Drill a hole through the center of one of the corks (top to bottom) just slightly smaller than the shaft diameter. Now drill two holes, one in the side of the dome and one in the side of the body. The hole should be sized so you can push the cork in about half its height. The holes should put the shaft within an inch of the upper surface of each grill. Now you can monitor the temperature at the grills more accurately. Plug the unused hole with the undrilled cork.

NOTE - Don't try to use the existing hole where the stock 'thermometer' is installed. For one thing, it's too large to easily get a good fitting cork. For another, it's several inches above the upper grill and that location will read somewhat hotter than the grill level itself.

A more expensive but easier fix is to obtain a Sunbeam or Polder electronic remote reading thermometer. They can be purchased for around \$25 to \$30 at kitchen shops or stores such as Service Merchandise. Push the probe through a small piece of wood or a cork so that it is not in direct contact with the metal grill, replace the lid and you can read the temperature at the remote display. Very accurate.

7.2.2. Modifying the Hondo/NBBD or SnP Pro smokers

The Hondo/NBBD and the SnP Pro are both off-set firebox smokers. Both can produce excellent barbecue right out of the box. However, there are several modifications which can improve their performance and ease of use and therefore enhance your own enjoyment at the same time. These modifications may be applicable to other, similarly designed smokers.

Modification 1 - Improve heat uniformity in the smoking chamber

Why? - The design of these smokers is such that the firebox is at one end and the exhaust stack is at the other. In addition, the hole between the firebox and cooking chamber is located about mid height of the cooking chamber. Since hot air rises and since the heat source is much closer to one end of the cooking chamber than the other, the actual temperature at the grill level varies greatly end to end.

HOW? - There are two modifications offered by the list members.

A. The easiest method is to obtain a piece of 12 inch or so aluminum flashing. Roll this flashing up so that it can be inserted into the smoke stack from below (remove the grill to gain access). Reinstall the grill and pull the flashing down to the level of the grill. If you need additional grill space, just push the flashing up into the stack to clear whatever you are cooking.

- B. This method saves grill space but requires the services of a good welder. Obtain a 4-inch piece of steel pipe (one list member used a diesel exhaust stack from a semi). Don't use a 3-inch pipe (same size as presently exists) as this is too small. Remove the existing stack and weld a patch into the hole. Cut a hole in the side wall of the cooking chamber at the end furthest from the firebox and about an inch above the bottom (so as not to allow grease to enter the new smokestack). Now, either bend or cut and miter the 4-inch pipe so it has a 90 degree bend in it and weld it to the opening just made. You will also probably have to weld a flat bar support (hanger) near the top of the cooking chamber to support the pipe, between the pipe and chamber side wall. The pipe should extend above the chamber about the same height as the one you replaced. Clean and repaint and you're ready to cook.

What these modifications do is force the combustion gas to escape the units at a lower level, thereby maintaining a more uniform temperature in the chamber both side to side and top to bottom.

Modification 2 - Eliminate the radiant heat hot spot

WHY? - The hole between the firebox and cooking chamber is wide open! This is great for airflow but bad from the standpoint of thermal uniformity. Any food close to the hole will not only be exposed to the high temperature combustion gasses but also to the radiant heat from the fire. Just like sitting in front of a fireplace in a cold room, the side facing the fire picks up radiant heat and gets much hotter than the side away from the flame.

HOW? - There are four methods offered to solve this particular problem.

- A. Cut an aluminum piece of flashing large enough to cover the firebox to cooking chamber opening from its highest point down to a level about 1/2 inch below the grill level. Make sure your grill is at its lowest normal working level. At the top of the cut piece of flashing, include enough additional material to engage the top bolt and the next two lower bolts that hold the firebox to the cooking chamber. You'll have to bend the flashing a bit to clear the small 'shelf' at the top of the cooking chamber to firebox opening on the NBB. Push the flashing up against the bolts to mark their locations. Drill three holes slightly smaller than the bolt diameter at these marked locations. Now, either push the flashing in place over the exposed ends of the bolts or remove the nuts one at a time and install the flashing secured behind the bolts.
- B. This modification is similar to number 1 above except that the flashing is sized and fit to extend INTO the cooking chamber instead of just vertically blocking the opening. For this mod, you want a piece of flashing that will hook to the top bolt and end up at the grill level but slanting down at a 45 degree angle. You will lose some grill space but you will maintain the opening at its original area and at the same time, force the hot gas out below grill level and protect the food from radiant heat.
- C. This modification was developed by Mike Roberts and is the most ambitious of all. It consists of a welded piece of steel at the opening and several more shields as you travel the length of the cooking chamber. First, a piece of steel is cut to close off the firebox to cooking chamber opening to just below grill level. A second piece of steel is welded to the bottom of this one, at a 90 degree angle, to force the exhaust gas further into the cooking chamber. This second piece is cut to the width of the first vertical piece and is 6-1/4 inches deep into the firebox. In effect, you will end up with a 'shelf' just below the grill level that extends 6-1/4 inches into the cooking chamber. All the exhaust gas has to pass under this shelf to escape the smoker. This baffle could also be fabricated from heavy gauge sheet metal and bent into shape without needing any welding. The sheet metal baffle would then be bolted onto the top two bolts holding the firebox onto the main smoker section. Next, 3 additional plates are cut out and set in the smoker at the same level, basically extending this shelf. Each shelf is 5 inches long by the width necessary to rest on the chamber sides at the same height as the first shelf. The edge of each shelf (nearest the chamber walls) has a cut out made to let heat rise as it progresses along. The cutouts are 1/8 X 4, 1/4 X 4 and 1/2 X 4 inches for the first, second and third portable shields respectively (you will end up with an "H" shaped piece of metal with a really thick center

section). The shields are placed in the chamber about 1/2 inch apart so the total length of this shelf becomes $22\frac{4}{3}$ inches ($6\frac{1}{4}$ plus $\frac{1}{2}$ plus 5 plus $\frac{1}{2}$ plus 5 plus $\frac{1}{2}$ plus 5). According to Mr. Roberts, this evened out the temperature, side to side, to within 20 degrees. NOTE - This modification could probably also be done using flashing to avoid the expense and time of welding.

- D. This modification accomplishes the intent of A and B although not to the same degree of effectiveness. Get an aluminum tray which is approximately the width of the firebox to cooking chamber opening. This tray should be tall enough to block the top of the opening and approximately 3 or 4 inches wide. Fill this tray with water and set it in front of the opening. It will block some radiant heat, force the gasses below the tray (to some extent) and boil off and maintain a more humid cooking environment. NOTE - This mod is only for the lazy and does not work anywhere near as well as the other three.

Modification 3 - Add a drain connection to the smoking chamber

WHY? - The NBBB and NB Hondo do not have a connection to drain away grease from the cooking chamber. Although not an absolute necessity, a drain hole can be quite useful.

HOW? - Weld a 1/2 or 3/4 inch piece of pipe or a 3/4 inch half coupling at the far end of the bottom of the smoking chamber. Attach a shut off valve and you have a drain connection. NOTE - Some propose to install a 90 degree elbow before the valve.

This arrangement allows you to do several things. You can put water or a combination of water and seasonings in the bottom of the smoker during its use. After smoking, simply drain away the leftover liquid/grease. You can also eliminate the use of a grease drip pan although this really isn't recommended. Additionally, should you ever want to clean your unit, you can fill it with cleaning solution, scrub it and then drain away the spent mixture.

Modification 4 - Improve the tightness of the unit openings

WHY? - These units are nicely made for the money but they are not precision made. Therefore, the doors and openings leak (allow air and smoke in and out) and thereby reduce the cooking efficiency and your ability to control what's going on.

HOW? - Install a gasket. A BBQ List member is evaluating a method using a high-temperature silicone sealant to make formed-in-place gaskets for his NBBB. This experiment will be reported in the next version of the FAQ. Another List member suggests using flat fiberglass gaskets made for wood-burning stoves.

HOW? - Do some body work. Another List member reports that a poor-fitting door can be made to fit better with some auto body type hammering with a dead-blow hammer and wood blocks.

Modification 5 - Improve the thermal efficiency of the unit

WHY? - These units are made of fairly light gauge steel. They heat up and cool down rapidly in response to changes in the fire intensity and outside weather conditions (wind and temperature). Adding fuel generally causes a temperature spike and letting the fire go too long without refueling generally causes a dip.

HOW? - Line your cooking chamber with firebricks. Remove the upper grates and set firebricks all along the bottom. Wrap them in aluminum foil to ease cleaning. While adding bricks will naturally extend the amount of time it takes to initially get the unit up to temperature by 15 - 30 minutes, it will be much more tolerant of fires which get too low or those times when you add a few more lumps of charcoal and the fire intensity subsides until the new fuel catches. The bricks hold heat and will tend to stabilize the temperature. They will not prevent temperature spikes but they will prevent the dips from being as low before the addition of the bricks. This can also be done to the firebox if you have sufficient room.

HOW? - If you are going to make modification 2 'C', use thick steel plates for the lower distribution plates. A steel plate that is 3/8 or 1/2 inch thick will add additional mass to the pit and help to stabilize temperature dips.

Modification 6 - Increase the volume below the fire-grate

WHY? - On some units, the position of the fire-grate is such that after a long day of cooking, there is very little room left under the grate for air to get in. This space is filled with ash from the fire so combustion efficiency suffers.

HOW? - Raise the fire grate. This can be accomplished by welding some angle iron to the sides of the firebox at the desired level so there is more room for ash to fall into while still having sufficient room for combustion air. Another method would be to obtain some 1/4 inch steel rod. Drill four holes (two in front, two in back) of the firebox at the level you want your grate. Push the rods through the holes and set the grate(s) on the rods. If you use two grates, you may have to increase the number of holes and rods accordingly.

Modification 7 - Improve temperature indication

WHY? - No temperature gauge comes as standard equipment with these units. Without something, you'll be hard pressed to maintain your desired temperature.

HOW? - There are a few proposed solutions:

- A. Buy a thermometer that will fit the hole in the door. Just remember, the location of this thermometer is higher than the grill and will give a somewhat higher reading than the actual grill level temperature. Also, if it is directly above a large piece of meat, your initial temperature indication will be lower than the actual temperature.
- B. Obtain a good quality candy or meat thermometer that has a shaft at least 4 inches long (temperature range about 150F to 350F). Obtain two matching corks, each about 4 times the diameter of the thermometer shaft. Drill a hole through the center of one of the corks (top to bottom) just slightly smaller than the shaft diameter. Now drill two holes, one to the left of the cooking chamber door handle and one to the right (about 18 inches apart). These holes should be sized so you can push the cork in about half its height. The holes should put the shaft within an inch of the upper surface of each grill. Now you can monitor the temperature at the grills more accurately. Plug the unused hole with the undrilled cork and swap positions as desired.

NOTE: - You can use the existing hole provided for a stock thermometer. However, it's several inches above the upper grill and that location will read somewhat hotter than the grill level itself.

- C. The preferred but more expensive fix is to obtain a Sunbeam or Polder electronic remote reading thermometer. They can be purchased for around \$25 to \$30 at kitchen shops or stores such as Service Merchandise. Push the probe through a small piece of wood or a cork so that it is not in direct contact with the metal grill, set it anywhere on the grill, close the door and you can read the temperature at the remote display. Very accurate, very easy.

7.3. Smoker maintenance

[I just got a new off-set-firebox type pit. How do I condition it?]

David Klose--

A new barbecue pit should be cured like a new iron skillet. You may chose to rub the inside of the pit with Pam, peanut oil, cooking oils, or even bacon grease. Light the pit with a medium fire using lump charcoal or seasoned wood, say to 220F.

Choke the smokestack control about 1/2 way closed and let it smoke heavily. A few hours is good--the longer the better. A pit will cure without oils, but the build-up of the resin base on the doors etc., doesn't seem to hold very well over the years without using oil. I have made maybe 100,000 barbecue pits. I have noted that pits cured with oils seem to produce better end product.

[Do I need to clean my BBQ pit? And if so, how do I do it and how often?]

Lloyd Carver--

The type cleanup required is partly determined by your type of equipment. If you have a vertical water smoker, there is very little to clean up. In the water smoker of course you need to dump the ashes each time the smoker is used. Next you will need to clean the water pan. Each time you use the water smoker grease drips into the water pan and is cooked down. This needs to be cleaned out before using again. If soap and water will not break this down, a little oven cleaner will take care of it. Lastly, when you take the last of the meat out of the smoker, you should brush down the grills. If you clean them with anything else you will need to re-season them before using again.

In a horizontal unit (off-set firebox type), the ashes will need to be cleaned out of the firebox or wherever the fire is built. The ashes can adsorb water and speed up the rusting process of the firebox floor. The horizontal unit could have a special problem not usually found in water smokers. Often there is no drip pan under the meat. This means rendered fat will accumulate in the smoke chamber. This could cause health problems, flavor problems, and even, if it got warm enough in the smoke chamber, possibly a fire or an explosion. This grease must periodically be cleaned out. Scraping followed by soap and hot water should get rid of this problem. This would be followed by re-curing as done when you first started. The last would be cleaning the grills/grates. This would be accomplished as in the water smoker.

After many uses or at least once per year you should check for buildup of carbon in the lid and smoke chamber. A wire brush should be used to clean this out. If you take it down to metal, re-season the inside.

Rust spots should be wire brushed, sanded and re-painted with high temperature grill or stove paint.

R. W. Ramsey--

Well, last night I thought I'd be a smartypants and clean the excess goo off the inside of the smoker, so I heated that sucker up to about 450F and sprayed it out real good with the water hose. Worked real well. All the goo was gone. Trouble is, it was starting to rust by this evening, so I have coated the interior with cooking spray and am sacrificing a perfectly good chicken to build up the goo again.

Harry Jiles--

I clean mine the same way. The steam produced when you spray in the water really cleans things up. I brush the whole inside down with soy oil as soon as it dries, which is only about 5 minutes after spraying, and have no problem with rust.

Bill Wight--

Some spray oven cleaner is a great way to get the grease and gunk off the bottom of an electric bullet water smoker and the grills. Do it outside and then spray it with the hose to wash it off. Also, my bullet smoker builds up a thin layer of soot/smoke residue on the inside of the middle section and inside the dome lid. I spray them with the water nozzle every month or so and knock off the stuff. This keeps it from dropping onto my barbecue and into my beans.

[What's the best way to repaint my pit?]

David Klose--

If the paint is peeling from the exterior of a barbecue pit, I recommend going to a large hardware store, and buying the best heat paint you can get. Try for Rust-o-leum 1000F, or 1300F paints if you can find them. When heated, epoxy paints are TOXIC and cannot and should not be used on food equipment like barbecue pits. The paint breaks down when heated and gets inhaled, so to speak. Not real good for you. You might not die right away, but it may be harmful to you.

Most commercial pit manufacturers usually use 500F or 700F paint. As I understand it, charcoal burns at 700-959F. Hardwoods burn at roughly 1050-1180F. Due to the expansion and contraction of the surfaces of barbecue pits made from sheet metal and steel to 1/2" thick, I have found that the metal can move as much as 1/8" during the heating and cooling process. The heat oxidizes and embrittles the paint, and the repeated expansions tear it, causing it to flake.

Start with the best paint you can find. I use 1300F paint on my barbecue pits. I give them five coats, painted over a three day period and dried a week before I will let a customer touch them. Smoking out (curing) the pit should also help set the paint just like you would a new skillet. Wire brush the bad areas well and then wipe down with water and allow that to dry. You can even light the pit with a LOW FIRE, say 200F, to help expand the metal so the paint will penetrate deeply into the pores. Then spray or wipe the paint on while the pit is warm. This helps bake it on. Apply a few coats, with an hour in between. Let the pit cool naturally. Cold water or high humidity at this point only counteracts the steps taken. Be sure there is a 70% humidity or less for the application of the base coat of paint if possible.

Your pit will probably peel again as there are very few paints of the quality needed for this application that the average person could afford. You can also apply Pam or peanut oil to the outside of the firebox after it has cooled when you finish cooking, as this will help keep the paint pliable, thus inhibiting cracking of the paint to a small degree.

7.4. Smoker temperature control

[Will the wind affect my barbecue pit while I'm smoking?]

Definitely, the wind will affect several things while you're barbecuing. A cold wind blowing across the pit will remove more heat than a pit working in still air. So you'll have to compensate for the additional heat loss. The wind can also get into the cracks, vents and joints of your pit and increase the air flow through it, causing the fire to burn quicker and hotter. Try putting your pit in the lee of the wind or erecting some wind baffles. Remember, it's the temperature inside your pit that's important, not what's going on outside. You can also insulate your pit. Check with an air conditioning company to see what kind of wrap would work.

[Would putting firebricks in my off-set firebox type pit help even out the temperature spikes and lows?]

Edwin Pawlowski--

If you increase the mass, the thermal dips would have to be lower. Aside from the mess of dripping grease, the underside could be lined completely and hold in a lot more heat.

[So let me get this straight. If using firebricks to help retain heat, do you put them in the smoking chamber or the firebox of an off-set smoker?]

Lloyd Carver--

The more mass you have in all parts of the pit should hold the temperature more stable in that area. In the firebox would be good to keep the output of the firebox stable and in the smoke chamber would be good

to hold the temperature more stable there. Just remember the drawback, it takes longer to get the pit up to smoking temperature.

Edwin Pawlowski--

Actually, the best way would be to do both. One of the reasons a Klose or an Oklahoma Joe's pit have better temperature control is because they are made from heavier metal than the typical discount store rig. Adding brick to the firebox would help, but adding it to the cooking chamber would help even more. Next would be adding a fiberglass insulating blanket around all of this. It would take longer to get all the brick up to cooking temperature, but once there, be less subject to fluctuations. The drawback is cost. If you buy a \$179 NBBB or SnP Pro, then add \$400 in modifications, you will have an improved but still lacking pit. For the same money, buy a good pit to begin with.

Tom Kelly--

I think you're both right in a way. Once you get the beast up to temperature (bricks in one or both sides) you'll have a large thermal reservoir that will withstand temperature loss better. It won't prevent temperature spikes.

Rodney Leist--

Tom's observations correspond with mine perfectly. I've used one firebrick in the wood chamber and one in the meat chamber of my NBBB for a few months now and am satisfied with the results. I use the firebrick in the meat chamber to cover the top half of the opening into the wood chamber in lieu of a metal baffle. If anyone tries this, I suggest putting the bricks through a break-in session before using them in close proximity to meat. Several small flakes of brick blew off during the first firing.

[Would insulating my smoker make it easier to control the temperature?]

Editor--

Definitely. Some list members, especially those in the northern climates, have put water heater blankets around their smokers. Makes a big difference. Some insulate the outside of the pit with professional oven-type insulation and then cover the pit with sheet metal. Doing this will dramatically reduce temperature swings while barbecuing and save a lot of fuel.

David Klose--

On the subject of heat retention, I have seen people use moving blankets to retain heat during rain storms, cold snaps, and Jack Daniel's holidays away from the pit on Super-Bowl Sunday, with great success. Another interesting trick, in a grill, is to line the charcoal up in an "S" shape, only lighting the first end of the coals. If done properly, the charcoal should burn "down the line" thus creating a smoker effect, allowing for easier cooking.

[I've seen people on the list writing about creosote. What is it and how does it form?]

Editor--

'Creosote' is a term for a group of organic compounds that can form during the destructive distillation of wood and coal. They are oily and sticky materials that condense out of the smoke on cooler surfaces--meat and the walls of the pit--when wood, charcoal or coal are burned without sufficient oxygen to affect complete combustion. The formation of creosote in your barbecue pit is to be avoided at all costs as it will ruin the meat.

Stephen J. O'Connor--

Bitter creosote occurs when smoke cools enough to allow certain substances to condense out of the smoke. Overwhelming the pit with too much cold meat can cause the smoke to cool. Other factors can cause it as well: a smoldering fire, poor air circulation, cold ambient temperature. Also, in my experience throwing a lot of cold fuel on a fire--especially when the fire has gotten low, can cause creosote to form.

Ways to reduce the odds of creosote occurring include:

- 1) allowing food to warm up for at least an hour before putting it on the cooker;
- 2) putting less cold food on at a time;
- 3) running a small hot fire that does not need to be choked down by closing vents;
- 4) regulating air flow with the intake vents rather than the exhaust chimney damper;
- 5) barbecuing in nice weather;
- 6) giving the pit plenty of time to warm up thoroughly before putting on the food;
- 7) adding new fuel gradually;
- 8) preheating or preburning the fuel.

I generally give my smoker a good long warm-up and get it up to a temperature well above the temperature at which I want to cook. I cannot let food sit out to warm up, so I put it in gradually. I preheat my logs by leaving them on top of the firebox before adding them to the fire. When I do add them, I often put them on the side of the main fire allowing them to further warm up without cooling the main fire. They ignite on their own, then I push them into the rest of the fire. When the fire goes down more than I intend, I carefully add small pieces of wood at frequent intervals.

When the weather is cold, windy, or wet, I need to be more careful. When the weather is warm, I can get away with a little more.

7.5. Smoker fire control

 [Can you give me some pointers on fire control using wood and charcoal?]

Kit Anderson--

Charcoal- Use natural lump hardwood. Get one of those chimney starters from the hardware or barbecue store. Put two sheets of newspaper in the bottom and fill the top part with charcoal. When the coals have started, dump them out of the chimney onto your pit burning surface. If the pieces of lump charcoal are too big, carefully break them into several pieces with a hatchet.

Wood- I use medium-width, fireplace-length, hardwood logs. Bark on or bark off--your choice. Seasoned logs have less creosote. (Editor--wood-burning beginners using NBBD-type smokers should use hardwood pieces of 1 1/2 to 2 inches in diameter by 8-12 inches long and progress to larger logs as they gain experience.)

Burning logs in a SnP Pro/NBBD--Open the chimney and intake dampers wide open. Start a secondary charcoal fire in a grill, Habachi or some other suitable container, and one in the pit's firebox. When the coals are going, put three logs on the secondary fire. The logs will flame. After the flames die down a bit (10 minutes), put one log in the pit firebox and close the damper halfway. Every half hour add another log to the secondary fire pit and move one from there to the pit firebox. Control the temperature with the firebox damper. Unless you're burning hickory or oak to fuel the pit, add a chunk of smoking wood (mesquite, hickory, pecan, apple, etc.) every time you add more fuel for the first three hours.

Charcoal in a SnP Pro/NBBD- Skip the secondary fire pit part and add a few of the larger chunks of charcoal every 30-40 minutes to keep the fire going. You can get some lump charcoal going in a secondary fire pit to have it ready for adding to the pit's firebox when necessary. A gas grill makes a good lump charcoal pre-burner.

Charcoal in a Weber Kettle-

Open one bottom vent and the top vent. Position the top vent opposite the open bottom vent. Put a pie pan below the meat to catch the juices. Bank a small amount of coals on one side of the grill over the open vent and let the smoker warm up for 20-30 minutes. Put another pie pan above the fire and add water to it. Put the meat over the drip pan. Stick a meat thermometer in the top or side of the grill, and work the fire

to stabilize the temperature around 200-240F. Hotter fires will significantly shorten cooking times and not allow slow-cooking of the meat.

Soak hickory, mesquite, cherry, apple or other wood chips in a bowl of water for 20 minutes or more, and place small amounts of the chips on the coals every 20-30 minutes or as often as desired. Place meat away from the heat source, on the side opposite the banked coals. If you have two or more slabs of ribs, use a 'rib rack' to help stand the slabs of ribs on their side next to each other. Place ribs thick side up/bone-end down, so the small ends stay moist. That's it! Sit back for 4 to 6 hours, watch the smoke rise, and drink your favorite beverage. Don't forget to add soaked wood chips every so often, and keep the water pan half full. You may want to turn the meat in-place to give each rib end or side equal time nearest the heat source.

[Can you tell me some more about smoking in a Weber kettle?]

Ken Haycook--

If your Weber is a charcoal dome-lid type, simply put 5 - 6 briquettes on opposite sides of the charcoal grate. Light them and wait until they turn gray all over. Put a foil pan in the middle of the grill area and add a little water to it. Place the meat, beef, pork, etc. over the pan. Add smoking wood to each side and lower the lid. Close the bottom vents but open the top one.

The 10 briquettes will keep the temperature at about 240F for about one hour, depending on the brand, your vents, and how you light it. Every hour on the hour, check the charcoal and bump the handle to knock off the ashes. Add no more than one briquette to each side. After the first hour, add another chunk of smoking wood. Make sure the wood is heavily soaked in water.

Continue this procedure until the meat is done. For briskets/pork butts, cook about 1 1/2 hours per pound. For chicken or turkey use 3/4 to 1 hour per pound, check it on the low side to prevent dryness. For turkey breasts use a higher heat at 3/4 hour per pound and use a butter, paprika, garlic salt, and black pepper blend of spices. It will come out like pepper bacon. For fish, 30 minutes per pound is usually good. I would put some lemon slices in the fish cavity to prevent drying and I would use about 4 briquettes per side rather than 5 - 6.

For whole turkeys I usually use peeled grapefruit, oranges, and lemons in the cavity. It doesn't add any flavors but a lot of moisture.

It's easy, just remember to keep your addition of coals to a minimum. The Weber tends to hold the heat well.

[What color smoke do I want coming out of my pit?]

Ed Pawlowski--

You want a light white or an invisible smoke. Even though you do not see smoke, the products of combustion are still in the air and working. Heavy dark or colored (green, yellow, orange) smoke is to be avoided at all costs.

Tom Street--

John Willingham says in his book - "When you think of barbecue, stop thinking of smoke. Smoke is nothing more than dirt, wafting into the air from burning wood. When the wood is properly burned at the right temperatures for barbecue, it does not smoke."

[I just got my brand new NB Black Diamond pit (Brinkmann Smoke'N Pit Pro) seasoned and I'm all set to go. The only fire I've built in a pit was in my old bullet water smoker. I have some questions.]

Question: 1. I used a Brinkmann thermometer stuck in the factory hole (about halfway up the lid). Is this anywhere near accurate?

This section is a summary of a thread begun by Tom and answered by Harry, Ed, Bear, Kurt, Mike, Rodney, Pat and Jim.

Answer: Nope. The temperature in the lid could run anywhere from 25-75F higher than meat rack temperature.

Q: 2. I had lots of smoke escaping from both the firebox lid (at the hinge seam) and at the cooking lid (mostly at either end but some along the bottom). Is there a gasket material that would work well? If I do nothing, is it a big loss?

A: My SnP Pro does the same thing. I've never bothered to mess with it. Doesn't seem to be a problem except maybe in the winter.

Q: 3. Temperature control was iffy. I started up with a small charcoal fire and the inlet damper open 1/4 or so (same for the outlet). It held 225F for a good 30 minutes and then it started to drop a bit. I threw in some more charcoal and opened the inlet and it took a good while to get back up. Overshot (hit 325 - 350F). Closed down on the damper from 3/4 to about 1/2 and the temperature dropped to 220F in less than a minute. Is it that sensitive to damper setting? I had a hard time maintaining any constant temperature.

A: You'll continue to have the same problem until you use it many times and get a good feel for it. I had the same problem with mine and found out it wasn't the smoker having the problem, it was me. After many, many uses, I've got it down pretty well. And then the weather changes and you have to figure it out all over again. Ignore what the book says and keep the exhaust damper wide open.

Q: 4. I chopped up some oak and wild cherry to try. Every time I added a "log" to my fire, I got thick, white smoke until it caught good. Is this how you do it?

A: Yep, it is a smoker. Try smaller pieces if you're worried about incomplete combustion. You can also warm or pre-burn your wood. Get some wood started in another pit or grill and add it hot to the firebox.

Q: 5. Speaking of fires, for the second seasoning at 350F, I had 3 or 4, 8 inch long by 2 inch diameter hunks of wood, burning away! Nice flames in the box, not too much smoke visible from the stack. Do you generally have actual flames? How big a fire (quantity of wood) is normal for smoking in a NBBB? Fill 'er up and choke it down or have a small amount and keep adding?

A: Stick to a small amount and add to it as you need to or you'll have high temperatures. I like to get my wood burning with just the right flame and then I close down the damper almost, but not quite, all the way. Open the outlet damper up all the way. Control the temperature with the inlet damper. If you close the outlet, the smoke will not vent, get stale, and you've just added that bitter taste everyone complains of to the meat. A big fire choked down will give you bitter smoke.

Q: 6. It was really great firing this up for the first time. I just need to learn a few things about the fire before I ruin several hundred dollars worth of meat practicing.

A: You probably won't ruin anything. It may not be the way you want it for the first few times, but still better than what you'd get from the local 'Q shack. By the time you learn with an empty smoker, it is too late. When you put meat in the thing, temperature control will be different, as will be the flow of air through it, around the meat. Don't fill it, but put something in it to try, a whole chicken is a good way to start. Just start cooking with it. Experience is the best teacher. I doubt that you will totally ruin much meat, if any.

You are going to see some temperature variance, especially when adding more fuel. Once I get the intake damper set, I don't mess with it much. When I add fuel, I leave the side door of the firebox open a little to let in more air and get the fuel burning quicker. When the temperature comes back up I close it. When I first started using my NBBB, I was always opening and closing the intake damper and trying to keep the temperature exactly where I wanted it. I now keep my hands off of it as much as possible and don't worry about 25-35F temperature swings and I get along much better. I cook almost exclusively with wood, although I learned a neat trick of starting a fire with charcoal to provide a good fire bed to get going.

I have found that if there is a LOT of smoke (i.e. under the doors and around lids, etc.) there is something wrong with either the air intake or the wood itself. The right-sized fire burns with hardly any visible smoke, that's what you want. You need to keep a good air flow through the unit at all times. This keeps a good clean burn going. Avoid using unseasoned wood, as it will tend to over-smoke and CAN cause bitter meat. Wet bark also can cause this problem. While I can't speak for everybody here, my best results are obtained when there is very little smoke from the stack and none at all from the doors or other openings. I use both vertical and horizontal off-set units (homemade) and usually if there's a bunch of smoke coming from the stack, I know it's time to put the brewskie down and check the fire.

You will learn to regulate the temperature by the amount of fire in your firebox. There will always be some open flame, but the best fire is the kind you would cook your marshmallows or "smares" on later. Regulating the amount of fuel, combined with the correct amount of intake air (never choke the exhaust) will give you the best results.

You already have lots of good suggestions. I'll add another. I used fiberglass wood-stove gasket to tighten up my NBBB. I found that it gave me much better temperature control, especially on breezy days. Look for flat gasket material, the round stuff is too thick for the doors to close. If all you can find is round material, you can use it on the outside of the NB, butted up against the seams, but not under them like you can with the flat stuff.

Using the gaskets has allowed me to start with a much larger load of charcoal to give a longer burn without fiddling with the fire. Before I added the gaskets, I had to use a much smaller charcoal load to keep the fire from getting too hot. This required much more frequent additions of charcoal and a lot more fiddling. The reason was too much air coming in through the gaps.

Q: 7. Just for point of reference, I have a grill that's about 12" x 14" that sits in the bottom of the firebox. My first lump charcoal fire was enough to make a 10 inch or so diameter pile that was only a few inches tall at the center. Is this too small?

A: I usually start with about 3-4 pounds of lump charcoal. Let it burn down pretty good and add an oak log and let that go for awhile until I get a good bed of coals and can start controlling the temperature. This usually takes an hour to an hour and a half. I then toss on one more log and let it catch fire for about 10 minutes or so. Close up the firebox damper almost all the way, open the lid to the smoke chamber to remove any built-up heat, close it back up and watch the grill level temperature. It will usually be in the general area of 200- 235F at this point. Meat goes on about now. I add a split log about every two to three hours from this point on.

I have a NB Hondo, same operating design as yours, just different shelves on the outside. I use two fire grates in the firebox turned so they run across the box and overlap (gets them up higher for better airflow.)

Temperature is pretty sensitive to damper positions. I usually move them in very small increments, then wait 15 minutes for things to stabilize before I judge the results. I add split wood (usually ash these days) directly to the fire. I use mesquite lump charcoal to keep things burning, and add a piece of wood as necessary to keep it smoking. The wood burns hotter than the charcoal, take that into consideration in your damper settings as you adjust (maybe add wood instead of opening dampers more). I used to fill it up with charcoal briquettes and choke it down so it would burn a long time without intervention. But I

have found that I get a much cleaner, more attractive and better tasting product by using a small hot fire and tending it more often.

I use about 10-12 pounds of lump charcoal to smoke all day (brisket or pork shoulder). I don't really know quantitatively how much wood for the same time, probably a half to a whole log 8 inches in diameter and 15 inches long.

The only piece of meat I ever ruined was a rack of pork ribs. At the time I thought I had gotten them just way too smoky. They were bitter, overpowering, and inedible. It was the only time I ever tried to use only wood in the smoker. Now, having learned more, I think that rather than being over-smoked that it was a creosote problem, caused by poor airflow in the pit.

You probably won't ruin anything, and you've great advice from everybody here. I learned it all by trial and error, until I found this list a few months ago! I'm still the only person I've met face to face who owns a smoker.

When I started with NBBB, I had the same problem, temperature spikes and low points. One thing that helped was to stop overreacting. By that I mean, when the temperature shoots up to 350F, don't shut down every damper to bring it down. When the temperature drops to 150F, don't open the intake wide open and dump a full load of hot coals in the firebox. Make small changes or you'll be riding a thermal roller coaster. Once I realized that, even temperatures were easier to maintain.

Make sure you're only making small adjustments, even if it appears you need to make big adjustments. If it gets too hot, just close down the INLET damper 1/8th to 1/4 of the way. If you want to get rid of excess heat immediately, open the cooking chamber door a bit. If the temperature drops a bunch, don't dump a truck load of coals in there. Open the damper 1/8 to 1/4 of the way, or add just a few coals. Remember, it could take up to 15 minutes or so for the temperature to react to what you do to the fire or air damper.

Another thing you have going for you is that when you put a 12 pound brisket on the grill, you have one heck of a thermal mass there. A brief spike in the temperature will not harm the meat, a short drop in temperature will not add hours to your cooking time.

Scott in Carolina--

Also, one of the troubles with the Brinkmann SnP Pro and New Braunfels BD is the lack of a damper between the firebox and the cooking chamber. My big Joe has a sliding damper system with convection tube that makes temperature and smoke control a breeze - assuming you have excellent fire-tending skills.

One thing we've taken to doing when not burning wood to coals is using smaller logs and placing some actually inside the fire box but away from the fire. We do this before adding them to the fire, it really heats them up and gets them going before we add them. We have very little smoke, and the barbecue never turns out bitter since I learned this trick.

Editor--

I thought it would be beneficial to those barbecue beginners attempting their first use of a wood-burning off-set firebox smoker to have the step-by-step instructions of a fellow beginner (about 8 months into barbecue) who learned it the hard way--trial and error. This article features the NBBB smoker, but the tips will work on the Hondo and SnP Pro as well.

[Rick, did you modify your NBBB smoker in anyway before you started using it?]

Rick Otto--

No. I began using it right out of the box. No modifications.

 [How many doors in the firebox does the NBBD (Hondo and SnP Pro) have?]

The NBBD firebox has two doors. It has a door lid on top that opens like the one in the cooking chamber. This top firebox door has a flat shelf welded on top for warming things directly over the heat. (Editor--the current model of the SnP Pro does not have this warming shelf.) The top firebox door opens wide and holds open. The NBBD also has a door on the end. The door is fitted with a latch. The 'butterfly air baffle' (the inlet air adjustment device) is in this door.

 [Can you put wood into the firebox from either door?]

Wood can be placed into the firebox by either opening the top of the firebox, (the worst scenario when you've got a fire going) or by opening the end door wide and placing wood directly on the fire. Using the firebox end door keeps the heat a little more constant and avoids a massive loss of heat when you open the top firebox top lid door.

 [Do you pre-heat your fuel wood?]

No, I do not preheat my wood, but it's not a bad idea.

 [What do you use for fuel?]

I start and continue with wood all the way. I tired to use briquettes, but the ash clogged the firebox too soon; I was smothering any fire I had. I didn't like wood chunks either. Seems as though if I used them dry, I got too hot a fire. If I used soaked chunks, I didn't like the color of the smoke.

 [OK, briquettes didn't work for you and you didn't like the wood chunks, so what wood do you use?]

I contacted an orchard owner and got a wonderful deal on some cherry, peach and pear wood. It's cut into anywhere from 12-18" lengths and from 1" to 3" in diameter. I split anything larger than 3" diameter before I burn them. The wood was aged at least a season before I got it.

 [Tell me how you start a fire in your NBBD and keep it going]

I like to use one of those waxy fire-starters (the kind you use to start campfires and fireplaces). It burns down pretty fast and it has no residue or odor. I just place it on the grate and pile some small kindling on top of it. I slowly add some larger pieces of wood until I can add two medium-sized logs (that's what I'll call them) to the fire and make sure they start. My fire starts with the two logs, and when I add wood, I try and make sure that I can add two more logs at a time. It just seems as though when you add two at a time, they seem to feed off of each other instead of just one fighting to get started.

 [In what position do you keep the exhaust vent on the smokestack?]

The vent to the cooking chamber (smokestack) is always left open! If that is closed down in any way, it concentrates the smoke in the cooking chamber and you risk bitter meat.

 [How do you control the temperature in the smoking chamber?]

Any temperature adjustment I make is done by the firebox side door butterfly air baffle opening/closing only. The exception to this is when I get a high heat spike. Then I open up the cooking chamber door for a couple of seconds and let some heat out. Sure, some smoke goes out too, but that's never been a problem. I just relax for a while until the temperature evens out in the smoker.

[How do you measure the temperature in the smoking chamber?]

I use a round analog thermometer that is mounted right into the cooking chamber door. It's not accurate as to the actual heat at the grill level, but it is accurate in determining what the heat is inside. When I have a steady fire going, the door-mounted thermometer reads 300F, while the grill level, where the meat is, is about 225F. What I DON'T DO is constantly mess with temperature adjustments. Very small adjustments to the butterfly air baffle in the firebox will make big temperature changes in the smoking chamber. I keep the air baffle open about 1/2 way all the time. To lower the smoking chamber temperature a little, I close the baffle about 1/4 turn. To increase the heat a little, I open the baffle 1/4 turn. Sometimes it takes even less adjustment than that. The point is, the fire will react, but not immediately. It's something that you can't adjust like a knob on a stove. If you keep this in mind: "the reaction to an adjustment is not immediate", then this will help you relax and not mess with the air baffle adjustment so often. Another thing to remember is this is: "LONG cooking times". The temperature spikes that do occur won't hurt the meat at all, and you should look at the whole process, not just at a momentary spike that makes you want to panic. I use a Sunbeam thermometer with the probe inserted into the meat and the wire extending out the exhaust pipe and the thermometer sitting on the shelf outside. That's what I judge the meat by, not the thermometer in the door. The one in the door give me an indication of how my fire is doing--not the actual temperature at the meat level.

After the temperature settles down, and the fire is even, I add the meat. Make sure it's at room temperature. When you open the cooking chamber to add the meat, naturally, the temperature in the smoking chamber will drop. DON'T adjust anything yet! When the door is shut again, the temperature will rise and level out without you making any adjustments. I try and look ahead and predict when the temperature will drop again. It just seems that if it's been at an even keel for a long time, it's probably time to add a couple of logs again. Anticipating the need for fuel prevents the temperature from dropping from 220F to 150F. Then panic addition of more wood, opening the air baffle, the temperature goes too high, then closing the air baffle, and waiting for the temperature to settle again. An even feed of a couple of small logs, about every 1/2 hour, is all it takes for me. I think that's important and I don't know why. I just get a better fire when I add two logs.

[How big is your fire? How much flame?]

I try and keep a small 'flicker' of a flame going between the two logs. If there is NO flame, the smoke is pretty intense (it's smoldering).

I get some pretty darn good results out of the NBBD and it sure beats gas or anything else I have ever tried. I sure hope I can help someone with this information . . . it works for me.

7.6. Using chips and chunks for smoke

[Can you tell me the best way to use chips and chunks of smoking wood in my charcoal smoker?]

Editor--

If you are using charcoal briquettes or lump charcoal to fuel your smoker, you must use chips or chunks of a suitable hardwood to give your meat the smoky flavor necessary for barbecue. Some List members like to soak the chips and chunks in water before adding to the smoker, some use them dry. Some members like to use an aluminum bag/log to hold the chips, some just toss them on the coals. You will

need to experiment and find the best way to add the smoking wood for your situation. You can use chips and chunks from all the smoking woods: hickory, oak, pecan, mesquite, fruit woods, grapevines, etc. Chips and chunks of these woods are available in barbecue stores, supermarkets, and places like WalMart, HQ, and Home Depot, as well as through mail-order houses. Don't buy too many chips or chunks at one time, as they tend to dry out and lose their flavor components. Buy what you need for one barbecue season.

Chips can be used by tossing onto a charcoal fire or onto the heated plate in a gas-fueled smoker. Most List members recommend soaking the chips in water for 30 minutes before using. Chunks of hardwood burn slower and last longer and are best in off-set firebox smokers using lump charcoal for fuel. Chunks are also good in electric pits where lava rocks are not used.

Hung Pham-

I have had pretty good experience with chips this way: Build a very well-sealed aluminum foil bag/log about 1" x 2" x 3" and fill it with chips. Punch a very tiny hole with a needle on top and one on bottom. Place the aluminum 'log' right on the coals or in an electric smoker, next to but not touching the element. In a gas-fueled smoker, place the aluminum log on the lava rocks or the heated plate. Plenty of smoke will start in about 10 minutes and then will keep going for close to an hour. After that, I stick the aluminum bag with a knife to make a bigger opening. Plenty more smoke will come out for at least another hour. I used to just throw the bag away after the first hour and wasted a lot of wood chips.

Soaking the chips in water will extend the smoking life. If you throw dry chips onto the hot coals, they will usually flame up and last only 20-30 minutes. Soaked chips will last an hour or so.

7.7. Wood vs. charcoal

Editor--A summary of several posts--

The traditionalist will barbecue only with wood. Many barbecuers on this list use a combination of lump charcoal and wood. Some use lump charcoal to get the hardwood fire going, some use the lump charcoal for the fuel and add wood chips or chunks for the flavor. In some areas of the US, it's hard to find reasonably-priced lump charcoal. In other parts, hardwood is expensive. It all boils down to a matter of what works best for you and where you live. If hardwood is plentiful and cheap, use that. If lump charcoal is more economical than oak or hickory, use it. Lump charcoal has the advantage of burning with a more uniform heat than logs of wood. There is less variation from piece to piece so the temperature control of the pit is easier. But with experience, you can learn to control the temperature of your pit with whatever fuel you use.

7.8. Briquettes vs. lump charcoal

Editor--A summary of several posts--

Many list members have a strong preference for lump charcoal over conventional charcoal briquettes. Briquettes are produced by crushing charcoal and mixing in additives, such as nitrates (to make them burn better), and clays and starches (as binders to allow pressing into the traditional shape). Some list members say the additives tend to impart their own undesirable flavors to meats smoked for long periods of time, as all good barbecue must be prepared. A Kingsford Company spokeswoman recently stated: "Briquettes are preferred by Americans for their uniform size and stable heat." She pooh-poohs concerns about their ingredients, which include: powdered charcoal, anthracite coal for long burning, limestone to create white ash, starch as binders, and sawdust and sodium nitrate for quick lighting. "The starch is perfectly natural and the coal is high-quality coal".

Pure charcoal (lump) can usually be found with diligent searching (some supermarkets, WalMart, HQ and Home Depot, etc.). It is sold in bags similar to briquettes. Pure charcoal is carbonized wood with no additives which might impart unwanted flavors in the meat. It usually comes in the naturally irregular shapes of the real wood from which it is made. Bags of lump charcoal are usually marked with the name of the wood it was made from, i.e. hickory, mesquite, oak, etc.

Bill Wight--

While attending a recent barbecue competition, we noticed that several contestants using charcoal briquettes, including the Grand-Prize winner. His briquettes were not Kingsford brand, however, but a brand-x type. So the lesson here is that some barbecuers make great-tasting product using briquettes. So if you want to use briquettes, experiment with different brands.

7.9. Gas-fired smokers

Editor--

Some smoker pits operate on gas. You can find gas-fired pits in all configurations: bullet water smoker, off-set firebox, and vertical smoker types. The SWOCS is a good example of a vertical unit that uses gas for fuel. In all gas smokers, wood chips are added for the smoke flavor. The chips are usually placed on a plate that is heated by the gas burner. Some gas-fired smokers have lava rocks that are heated by the gas flame. Some list members have added gas burners to their traditional off-set firebox wood-burning pits for use during long smoking periods, as needed for briskets. The gas burners can be removed and replaced as required. List members who have SWOCS gas-fired smokers, often use a clay flower pot to heat the smoking wood chips or pellets. The chips slowly burn and give off a steady, light, white smoke. Add chips every hour or so as needed. Some gas-fired smokers use a system to deliver wood pellets to a heated plate. The pellets are fed automatically. List members report mixed results with these units.

7.10. Electrically-heated smokers

Editor--

Home smoker pits also operate using electricity. An element heats the air that heats the pit. Most electrical pits are the water bullet type smokers. Again as in gas, wood chips or chunks are placed on or near the heating element to slowly burn and produce the smoke for flavoring the meat. If you are shopping for an electric smoking pit, we recommend that you buy a unit that comes with a way to adjust the temperature of the heating element. The Char-Broil Electric Water Smoker comes with such a control, the current models of Brinkmann Smoke'N Grill Electric and Gourmet Electric Smoker units do not have that feature. List members have reported situations where the fixed temperature was either too hot or too cool. The Cookshack smokers are a premium line of electric oven-type smokers that use wood chips for the smoke flavor.

8. Wood for smoking

8.1. Types of wood suitable for smoking

Pat Lehnherr--

ALDER - Very delicate with a hint of sweetness. Good with fish, pork, poultry, and light-meat game birds.

ALMOND - A nutty and sweet smoke flavor, light ash, very much like pecan. Good with all meats.

APPLE - Very mild with a subtle fruity flavor, slightly sweet. Good with poultry (turns skin dark brown) and pork.

ASH - Fast burner, light but distinctive flavor. Good with fish and red meats.

BLACK WALNUT - Very heavy smoke flavor, usually mixed with lighter wood like hickory or mesquite. Can be bitter if used alone. Good with red meats and game.

CHERRY - Mild, fruity, but slightly bitter if it comes from chokecherry trees. Good with poultry, pork and beef (turns skin brown).

GRAPEVINES - Tart. Provides a lot of smoke. Rich and fruity. Good with poultry, red meats, game and lamb.

HICKORY - Most commonly used wood for smoking. Sweet to strong, heavy bacon flavor. Good with pork, ham and beef.

LILAC - Very light, subtle with a hint of floral. Good with seafood and lamb.

MAPLE - Smoky, mellow and slightly sweet. Good with pork, poultry, cheese, and small game birds.

MESQUITE - Strong earthy flavor. Good with beef, fish, chicken, and game. One of the hottest burning.

OAK - Heavy smoke flavor. Red oak is good on ribs, white oak makes the best coals for longer burning. Good with red meat, fish and heavy game.

ORANGE and LEMON - Light and citrusy. Good with pork and game birds.

PEAR - A nice subtle flavor. Much like apple. Excellent with chicken and pork.

PECAN - A cool burner. Nutty and sweet. Tasty with a subtle character. Good with steaks, ribs, and cheese.

SWEET FRUIT WOODS - Apricot, Plum, Peach

Great on most white or pink meats, including chicken, turkey, pork, fish. The flavor is milder and sweeter than hickory.

Rock McNelly--

Well-seasoned COTTONWOOD is successfully used in several barbecue establishments near me in Colorado. It is a softer wood than alder and very subtle in flavor. Use some chunks of other woods (hickory, oak, pecan) for more flavor. I was told don't ever use green cottonwood for smoking.

Dave Klose--

On the subject of BBQ woods, I have found the best results to be from nut and fruit-bearing trees, cut down from 6 months to 2 years ago. Live oak, hickory, mesquite, pecan, peach, pear, apple, apricot, and maple to list a few. These are the safest types to use for cooking. I have found that wood over two years old tends to produce a dirty taste in the food more often than not. Wood can be cut down whole, and split after five or so months of seasoning. I recommend splitting three days or so before cooking with it.

Bill Wight--

The ACACIA tree is in the same family as mesquite. When burned in a smoker, acacia has a flavor similar to mesquite but not quite as heavy.

Dave Klose--

Herbs and Spices - Don't forget you can add soaked garlic, peppers, onions, herbs, and spices directly to your fire. Good with all meats and vegetables. Try using apple chips soaked in water, placed on the coals when you cook duck or goose in your smoker. It will taste like you rubbed your bird with honey. Delicious. Also try smoking a cherry pie on pecan wood. Great.

Scott Mark--

Be careful when you use hickory--it's a very strong-flavored wood. If you're going to be smoking for a long time (butts, shoulders, brisket), a lot of hickory can impart a bitter taste unless you first pre-burn the hickory to coals. As to the question of how long to season wood, in my opinion 3 months isn't long enough to dry the wood out enough. I personally don't cook with anything seasoned less than 6 months unless I'm preburning. Pre-heating the wood will help you to avoid the dreaded stale (cold) smoke and the nasties associated with it. I pre-burn my hickory when I'm doing only ribs.

[I just got a load of mixed hardwood. It all looks the same. The bark on the hickory looks smoother than the oak but I can't visually tell the difference between the oak and hickory. Can somebody help?]

Rock McNelly--

Just looking at the bark, it really is hard to tell the difference between hickory and oak, and I have a less than a perfect record guessing between them! But what I have found to work, almost 100% of the time, is to take a lighter and burn the edge of the wood just enough to release that good aroma that each one has. Hickory will jump out at you like a freight train! While the oak will be just a bit more subtle about it. Another idea is to make yourself sort of a "catalog" of the different woods once you've positively identified a chunk of it. Use a piece of plywood, or something similar, and mount chunks of each wood, with the bark on them. Put the name under each piece. Keep the catalog near your wood pile for easy reference.

[I was wondering what the BTU content of the different smoking woods is?]

Danny Galden--

I'm gonna make this simple for you. Pound for pound, all woods create the same amount of BTUs. Does this mean that a cord of seasoned pine puts out the same amount of heat as a cord of seasoned hickory? NO! The hickory will produce twice the amount of BTU's of the pine because it weights roughly twice as much as pine.

So if one threw three 18 inch long, 4 inch round, seasoned hickory logs into their wood-burning stove, they would create about twice the heat of three pine logs the same size, for the hickory is much denser and heavier. But, if one was to put 20 pounds of pine, or 20 pounds of hickory into the firebox, the overall heat would be the same. Now understand the pine would burn much faster, and give off a lot of heat fast, then die down, as the hickory would burn much slower, and give its heat off at a more even rate. By the way, pound for pound, green wood gives off much less BTUs than seasoned wood, for it takes a lot of the heat energy to burn the moisture out of the green wood (i.e. turn it to steam). Do not ever use pine for barbecuing--I'm only using it here to show the differences in wood density.

Ed Pawlowski--

A cord of hardwood is about 12,500,000 BTU of heat.
A hundred gallons of heating oil is 13,600,000 BTU of heat.
Natural gas has a 1000 to 1100 BTU per cubic foot.
Propane has 2519 BTU per cubic foot or 21,670 BTU per pound or 92,600 BTU per gallon.

Note that the hardwood is an estimate that will vary depending on how tight it is stacked, the mix of wood, and the seasoning of the wood.

As long as I'm tossing numbers, a ton of coal is 25,000,000 BTU and a pound of Styrofoam is 18,400 BTU.

So, to answer the original question, the harder the wood the more power packed in the same volume. Wood density can vary considerably in the same tree so you will find little specific information about the heat content of a species.

[I have this wild cherry that has been down for a couple years. It is not rotten but it is blackened on the ends from the weather and has a few soft spots where ants have gotten into it. OK to use it for smoking?]

Danny Galden--

All seasoned woods tend to turn a dark color on the ends. If the areas where the insects have eaten are airy and spongy, then do away with them. I see no reason why you can't use the good areas for barbecuing.

The only thing that concerns me about using wood that is very seasoned is that it tends to burst into flames rather than burn slowly. The problem this creates can be a serious one if you're not careful. When

the old seasoned wood ignites, it can cause a fast rise in temperature in the pit, causing it to overheat. Most folks want to quickly close down the air damper, which causes the fire to starve and create creosote. Creosote is a very unforgiving enemy of barbecue, for it only takes a minute or two for it to blacken and foul the meat in the smoker. Once this happens, you can wipe and wash off the meat all day long, but it will never be the same. The oily, stinky smell will be on and in the meat. I didn't read this from a book, I learned the hard way many years ago. You must be very careful when using very seasoned wood, as well as green wood.

If you are going to use the wood for smoking only, and have another kind of heat source (charcoal, gas, electricity), then the cherry wood shouldn't present a problem. Being as old as it is, soak it in water over night, or for several hours before adding it to the heat source. It would probably be wise to wrap it in foil and punch a couple of very small (toothpick size) holes in it. You will be amazed at how much smoke will come out of these two little holes. Make too many holes in the foil, and the wood will stand a much greater chance of catching fire.

[I'm new at the burning wood in my barbecue smoker. Can you give me some general information about wood?]

Danny Gaulden on wood--

Wood Storage

Once the wood has been split, it must be stacked to dry or season. Drying occurs more rapidly ALONG the grain. Therefore don't stack the wood for drying until it is split. Avoid damp places or depressions where water will collect after a rainfall. The pile should be free-standing with maximum exposure to air and sunlight. A tarp over the wood pile in rainy season helps keep it dry.

Green Wood

Green wood can be as much as 65 percent water. Much of this moisture evaporates very quickly. In three months of reasonable weather (evaporation depends on temperature and humidity), the seasoning is half complete and the fuel value is 90 percent of what it will be when thoroughly dry; in two years the wood is as dry as it will get.

There is an appreciable difference in BTU rating for woods burned green or air-dried. Completely dry hardwood has about 7850 BTU's per pound whereas green wood when burned loses over one-eighth (1200 BTU's per pound) in evaporating the moisture.

It requires no work to let the wood sit for at least a year. In the process you are increasing the heat value, the wood will be lighter, ignite better, and produce less smoke and fewer sparks. Wood will dry faster if it is split. Much depends on the humidity and the weather in your area. In some areas in May and June, wood will dry rapidly, it will reabsorb water in July and August, dry out again in September, reabsorb water in October. Potentially wood can increase its moisture content if not properly stored.

Drying can be hastened if the pile is stacked criss-cross for three months, then stacked in the normal parallel fashion. Green wood is easy to identify. Just split a piece. The core will look wet and shiny; dry wood looks dull and the saw marks are less pronounced. Green wood is almost twice as heavy as seasoned wood and will make a dull thud when two green sticks are hit together. It is hard to handle, hard to light, and burns slowly. Much of its energy is lost in heating, then evaporating the excess moisture. As wood dries, the moisture evaporates naturally and the wood begins to shrink. Wood, even when air-dried, is still has 20-25 percent moisture content. Since wood shrinks unevenly, cracking and checking of the wood occurs. Dried wood can be recognized by the weathered ends, and by the cracks which will radiate like spokes out from the heartwood.

Buying Wood

The delivery of wood is not yet a regulated business. Whether you are actually "taken" or not, you probably will think so. One delivery won't appear as large as the next, will be piled differently if at all, and may have assumed another name by the time it arrives. Wood is sold by the truck load, by weight, in cords, ricks, runs, or units. All this is as confusing to the wood-burner as to many dealers. Others simply

take advantage of the fact that most homeowners don't know the difference between wood species or understand wood measurements. Wood usually is sold in divisions of a STANDARD CORD which is a neatly stacked pile eight feet long x four feet wide x four feet high covering 128 cubic feet. Since wood can't be stacked without air space, only 60-110 cubic feet of the 128 may be solid wood. (Usually it runs between 80-90 cubic feet with more solid wood content in round wood than split.) A FACE CORD is also called a RICK or a PALLET and is 1/2 a standard cord. There is a considerable difference in weight between woods; a standard cord of air-dried hardwood weighs 4000 pounds while a standard cord of softwood will weigh half that.

8.2. To bark or not to bark

[When I smoke with a wood fire, should I leave the bark on or remove it?]

Beverly Collins--

I learned the hard way--ruining some good meat in my smoker by leaving the bark on. Now I save the pieces with the bark on and use for my grilled meat. Seems to work fine there where I am depending on burning the wood to coals instead of smoking.

Rick Thead--

I don't worry about the bark. I've read posts that said to take it off. It might depend on the nature of the fire. As I've said, I prefer a free burn and can get away with it since I have a large smoker. Under these conditions, I don't find that I have a problem with the bark. On other types of smokers, there might be a problem with bitter taste. I concern myself more with split wood versus solid logs. I've found that split wood burns much more cleanly and consistently than solid logs of the same dimensions (3 to 6 inches across).

Mike Cain--

I totally agree with Rick in that split wood burns much better than whole pieces of the same size. Much of this I attribute to having the heartwood exposed to the heat. I have formed a "postulate" that, if written, would state that it takes about as much "energy" (or fire) to burn through the bark to the heartwood as you actually reap from the piece of wood once the bark is penetrated.

M. Bedouin--

To me it doesn't make a difference--bark on or off.

Harry Jiles--

IMHO, the bark can add a bitter taste to the meat. Someone else might know more about this and can correct me if I am wrong, but I was told this was due to the tannic acid which the bark contains. I remove all bark from the wood I use in my Hondo and also remove all that I can from the chips I use in my SWOCS smoker.

Ed Pawlowski--

There was a discussion in 1996 on the list about bark giving the meat a bitter taste. If I recall, it was never completely settled. I leave the bark on the wood if it does not come off easy. Can't say as I ever noticed a taste difference, bark on or bark off.

Rodney Leist--

Like green vs. dry, this debate is never over. Most folks probably don't think too much about this one but some feel the burning bark can produce a bitter taste. Again, you decide.

8.3. Pre-burning wood

[What is pre-burning of wood or charcoal?]

Rodney Leist--

A technique allowing the as-needed production of pure, hot coals for the use in the slow smoker firebox. The technique is especially useful for anyone having a smoker constructed of lighter gauge material, i.e. smokers less than \$500, because controlling temperature is usually easier when working with hot coals instead of raw wood. Pre-burning is accomplished in an old grill, a half-drum or heavy duty pan, or even in a small pit if your yard can take it. Build a small fire with several split pieces or limbs of fuel wood such as hickory or oak. You can use the pre-burned pieces at different stages. Using pieces which have been only blackened on the outside provide smoke to blend with the primary smoking wood in addition to heat. Slight pre-burning also allows any undesirables, such as insects, spiders, mold, etc., to be burned off before they add to the flavor of the meat. Wood which has been pre-burned to hot coals is used to provide heat only. Using coals makes temperature control much easier since no extreme temperature drops occur as when adding cold wood to the firebox. Anticipate your needs and add additional pieces as needed to your pre-burn fire.

8.4. Green or seasoned?

Rodney Leist--

This seems to be like a religious debate. Many excellent barbecuers and restaurants advocate one or the other. Some say green wood tends to produce a bitter creosote taste due to saps in the wood, while others say the saps produce the best flavor.

Dave Klose--

You can use some woods green for smoking, but under no circumstances should you use green mesquite for smoking. It will produce a bitter taste in the pit for years that cannot be sandblasted out. People have used this before because they saw someone in a restaurant using it. That was grilling with it, not smoking.

Editor--

We recommend that the beginning barbecuer use only seasoned wood until he or she gets some experience in smoking with a wood-burning pit. Using green wood without knowing what you are doing is a quick way to ruin barbecue.

8.5. What types of wood should I not use?

Dave Klose--

Don't use any wood from conifers (pine, fir, spruce, redwood, cedar, cypress, etc.). I saw a man cook with the heart of pine one time that promoted some of the nastiest red splotches all over the skin of the unhappy diners; made them extremely sick.

8.6. How much does lump charcoal and smoking wood cost?

Editor--A summary of several posts--

List members report lump charcoal prices in bags of 20 pounds to be between \$6 and \$10 per bag (in mid 1997). In 40 pound bags it can be a little cheaper per pound, running \$10 to \$18 per bag.

Prices for smoking hardwoods will vary with your location. Prices are as of late 1997 include delivery and splitting. Where there is lots of hardwood, like in parts of the south, hickory can cost you as little as \$75 a cord. In Carlsbad NM, you can buy a cord of pecan for \$110. In the hill country of Texas, you can get a cord of oak for \$80. In So. California, where hardwoods are scarce, a cord of oak or mesquite costs \$400, a cord of almond about \$280. In Virginia, a mixed cord of hickory and oak runs \$135. In central Illinois, a cord of mostly oak with some hickory and maple mixed in runs \$90-100. In western Connecticut, a cord of oak with a little hickory and maple thrown in will cost you about \$90. In southern Oregon, a cord of oak runs \$120, pear wood about \$150.

9. Dry rubs and BBQ sauces

9.1. Dry rubs

 [Tell me some more about dry rubs and perhaps a few really good recipes.]

Rick Thead--

The rub is the second most important part of the barbecue process, next to the smoking technique. There are two main concepts to keep in mind when formulating your rub. The proportion of salt should be great enough to trigger osmosis and begin to draw the moisture from the surface of the meat, and (some may disagree with this) the proportion of sugar should not be excessive because it will caramelize and burn during smoking and leave a bitter taste. However, since sugar contributes to osmosis, it is an important component and shouldn't be eliminated.

Beyond that, your rub should only be limited by your imagination. Other ingredients to consider can include paprika, cumin, garlic powder, onion powder, black pepper, cayenne pepper, chile powder, oregano, sage, or whatever sounds good to you.

I like to keep my rub in a shaker for easy application. Rub should be applied at least the night before smoking. Anything longer, up to three days, is better. Shake the rub over the entire surface of the meat to be smoked. Use a generous amount at first and then, as it starts to get moist and adhere, add more. I don't think it's necessary to "rub" it in. I find that that only results in uneven distribution, and besides, it stains your hands. Wrap the meat loosely in butcher paper and leave in the fridge until a couple of hours before smoking.

I find rubs to be far more useful than marinades especially for large pieces of meat such as briskets and pork butts. For cuts such as these, the internal and external fat melts through the meat during cooking keeping it moist. I believe that the texture of the meat is improved by drawing out excess moisture, before cooking, through osmosis. The dry surface of the meat and the rub itself combine to produce a flavorful and attractive crust on the finished product. Unless it is thoroughly blotted dry on the surface, marinated meat won't color properly.

My favorite rub comes from a great book, "The Thrill of the Grill" by Schlesinger and Willoughby, and consists of the following:

All-South Barbecue Rub

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
2	tablespoons	salt
2	tablespoons	sugar
2	tablespoons	brown Sugar
2	tablespoons	ground cumin
2	tablespoons	chile powder
2	tablespoons	freshly cracked black pepper
1	tablespoon	cayenne pepper
4	tablespoon	paprika

Simply mix together. I usually double or quadruple the recipe since it is used liberally.

=====
 Editor--

Here are some other dry rubs List members like to use.

General-Purpose Dry Rub

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
--------	---------	----------------------------------

2-1/2	tablespoons	dark brown sugar
1-1/2	teaspoons	dried sweet basil
1/8	teaspoon	ground cumin
3/4	teaspoon	ground coriander
3/4	teaspoon	ground savory
3/4	teaspoon	dried thyme
3/4	teaspoon	black pepper
3/4	teaspoon	white pepper
2	tablespoons	paprika
2	teaspoons	dry mustard
2	teaspoons	onion powder
2	teaspoons	garlic powder
2	tablespoons	salt

=====

Poultry Perfect Rub

Recipe By : "Smoke and Spice"

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
3/4	cup	Hungarian paprika
1/4	cup	black pepper -- freshly ground
1/4	cup	celery salt
1/4	cup	sugar
2	tablespoons	onion powder
2	tablespoons	dry mustard
2	teaspoons	cayenne
2	tablespoons	zest from 3 to 4 lemons, dried and minced

Mix ingredients in a bowl. Store in a tightly sealed jar in a cool dark place.

=====

Carey Starzinger--

Here is one of my favorite dry rubs:

Barbecue Spice Mixture

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1/2	cup	Chili powder
1/4	cup	Hickory flavored salt
3	tablespoons	Onion powder
2	tablespoons	Cumin
1	tablespoon	Paprika
1	tablespoon	Garlic
1	tablespoon	Brown sugar
1	teaspoon	Cayenne pepper
1/2	teaspoon	Dry mustard
1/2	teaspoon	Lemon zest

Mix ingredients thoroughly.

=====

Garry Howard--

Dry Rub No. 1

Recipe By : GRILLIN' AND CHILLIN' SHOW #GR3603

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	tablespoon	paprika, Hungarian
1/2	teaspoon	celery salt
1/2	teaspoon	sugar
1/2	teaspoon	sage
1/2	teaspoon	mustard
1/2	teaspoon	Chipotle powder

Mix all ingredients well and reserve in refrigerator, covered tightly. Will keep for up to 2 weeks.

=====

Bear's Brisket Rub

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
2	tablespoons	garlic powder
2	tablespoons	onion powder
2	tablespoons	salt
2	tablespoons	pepper
1	tablespoon	thyme
1	cup	dark brown sugar

Mix ingredients well and rub on.

=====

Jack's Dry Rub

Recipe By : GRILLIN' & CHILLIN' SHOW GR3626

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	teaspoon	sage
1	teaspoon	salt
1	teaspoon	pepper
1/2	teaspoon	ground cumin

Combine all ingredients, and mix well.

=====

From Garry Howard--

"On The Grill Memphis" Rib Rub

Recipe By : On The Grill Magazine - June 1997

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
3	tablespoons	paprika
1	tablespoon	onion powder
1	tablespoon	garlic powder
1	tablespoon	ground basil
1 1/2	tablespoons	dry mustard
1	tablespoon	red pepper
1/2	tablespoon	black pepper

Combine dry rub ingredients and rub onto ribs. Cook ribs over hickory coals at 190 to 200F 4 to 5 hours. Fifteen minutes before serving coat the ribs with heated honey.

=====

Garry Howard--

Cambridge Dry Rub (thanks to Chris Schlesinger)

Recipe By : John Willingham's World Championship Bar-B-Q

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1/2	cup	dark or light brown sugar
3	tablespoons	salt
3	tablespoons	black pepper
3	tablespoons	chili powder
2	tablespoons	cumin powder
2	tablespoons	paprika
2	teaspoons	garlic powder -- optional
2	teaspoons	lemon pepper -- optional

I adapted this rub from a recipe by my good friend Chris Schlesinger. His version is in his book "The Thrill of the Grill", which he wrote with John Willoughby. I have altered the quantities of the ingredients to suit my own tastes. This is an excellent all-purpose rub for chicken, fish, pork, beef, or lamb, and can also be a breading for deep-frying. Sprinkle it into the batter for deep-fried zucchini, onion rings, or mushrooms. Wow! For a basting sauce or marinade, I add soy sauce, vinegar, and water.

In the top half of a double boiler set over simmering water, combine all the ingredients. Cook for about 20 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes or so, until the sugar begins to melt and the mixture thickens. Remove from the heat and let the mixture cool to 100F. Pass the mixture through a sifter. Use immediately or store in a cool, dark place for several months.

SPICY CHILI RUB

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	tablespoon	ground black pepper
2	teaspoons	cayenne pepper
2	tablespoons	chili powder
2	tablespoons	ground cumin
2	tablespoons	brown sugar
1	tablespoon	ground oregano
4	tablespoons	paprika
2	tablespoons	salt
1	tablespoon	granulated sugar
1	tablespoon	white pepper

Mix all ingredients in small bowl.

[Do I have to use an exact recipe or a commercial rub for doing good BBQ?]

Billy Maynard aka 'Belly'--

There are as many ways of doing barbecue as there are people--there are no two going to do it just alike. I use both salt and brown sugar in my rubs and sauces and anything else I can find. I don't think I ever make a rub or BBQ sauce the same two times in a row. I may try but there is always something that is a little different. So just play with your sauces and rubs and get them to where you like them.

Editor--I saw a post some months back (can't find it again for inclusion here) where the poster said that he kept a jar for combining left-over rubs, a little of this recipe, a little of that. He said one day he used his left-over jar for the rub on his barbecue meat and this 'special blend' produced the best barbecue he'd ever made.

=====

Kit Anderson--

Chris Schlesinger's BBQ Rub

Amount	Measure	Ingredient	Preparation Method
1/4 cup		paprika	
1/4 cup		cumin seed, toasted and ground	
1/4 cup		coriander seed, toasted and ground	
1/4 cup		brown sugar	
1/4 teaspoon		salt	
1/4 teaspoon		pepper	

9.2. BBQ sauces

[How about a few recipes for some really good BBQ Sauces?]

Jeff Lipsitt--

Sweet & Spicy BBQ Sauce

Amount	Measure	Ingredient	Preparation Method
1 1/3 cups		brown sugar	
1	15-ounce can	tomato sauce	
1	cup	cider vinegar	
1	large	onion, chopped	
6	tablespoons	Dijon mustard	
1 1/3	tablespoons	thyme, dried, crumbled	
1	teaspoon	salt	
1	teaspoon	cayenne pepper	

Combine all in medium saucepan. Simmer 15 minutes to blend flavors. Season with pepper to taste. (Can be made two days ahead. Cover, chill.)

credit: Bon Appetite - Nov. 1992

=====

Bill Wight--
Here is one of my favorite BBQ sauces.

Kansas City-Style BBQ Sauce

Recipe By : John Willingham's World Champion Bar-B-Q

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
3/4	cup	Light brown sugar -- packed
1	pkg	chili seasoning (1 1/4 oz.) (Garry Howard's Chile Powder recipe is good)
2	teaspoons	Dry mustard
1	teaspoon	Ginger -- ground
1/2	teaspoon	Allspice -- ground
1/4	teaspoon	Cayenne pepper
1/4	teaspoon	Mace -- ground
1/4	teaspoon	Black pepper -- fresh ground
1	cup	White distilled vinegar
1/4	cup	Molasses
1/4	cup	Water
32	ounces	Ketchup
3	teaspoons	Liquid smoke (optional)

In a large saucepan, combine the brown sugar, chili seasoning, mustard, ginger, allspice, cayenne, mace, and black pepper. Add the vinegar, molasses, water, and liquid smoke. Stir until dry ingredients are dissolved. Add the ketchup and stir to mix.

Bring to a boil over high heat, stirring constantly to avoid spattering. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool to room temperature. Use immediately or cool to room temperature, cover, and refrigerate for up to 1 week.

This will last much longer than one week in the refrigerator if you use commercial ketchup (which has an antioxidant in it).

Dreamland Barbeque In Tuscaloosa

Here is the "Almost-Dreamland" recipe which was concocted by a writer for "Men's Journal" that is declared to be very close to the real recipe by Ms. Bishop-Hall:

Almost Dreamland Barbecue Sauce

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	28-ounce can	tomato puree
1/3	cup	yellow mustard
3	cups	water
1 1/2	cups	cider vinegar
1/4	cup	dark corn syrup
2	tablespoons	lemon juice
1	tablespoon	sugar
1	tablespoon	brown sugar, packed
2	tablespoons	chili powder
1	tablespoon	dry mustard

1 tablespoon paprika
 2 teaspoons ground red pepper
 2 teaspoons onion powder
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

In a large saucepan, whisk together tomato puree and mustard until smooth. Stir in remaining ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve warm. Sauce may be refrigerated for several weeks.

=====

Wyndell Ferguson--

Fergy's BBQ Sauce (Tomato based)

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
2	cups	Catsup
1	cup	Cider Vinegar
1	tablespoons	large onion, chopped
4	tablespoons	Chili Powder
2	cup	water
1	tablespoons	Garlic Powder
1	tablespoons	Worcestershire Sauce
1/4	cup	Molasses
2	tablespoons	Louisiana Style Hot Sauce

Bring to boil, then reduce heat and let simmer for 30 min, stirring occasionally. Store in jar or squirt bottle.

=====

Rock--

I, like most of you, have a few favorite sauce recipes that I like. But being as lazy as I am, one of my favorites is a doctored-up version of Cattlemen's Smoky BBQ sauce. It's cheap, at about \$7.00 a gallon, and readily available at Sam's, and many other wholesale warehouses, and it's good straight out of the jug!

Normally, I'll add butter (margarine) to add a bit of creaminess to it, and then brown sugar to sweeten it up just a bit. This has been one of my all time favorite standbys. Well, this past weekend, I spiced it up a bit by adding roasted garlic pepper, and chipotle sauce to it along with the butter and brown sugar. I, along with my guests were really pleased with the results.

The addition of the chipotle sauce added a deep, earthy taste to it with just enough "after glow" to liven it up. The roasted garlic pepper added a great warmth of garlic to the blend. I suppose the warmth was accomplished by the "pepper" part of it.

Rock's Doctored-Up Cattleman's BBQ Sauce

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	quart	Cattlemen's Smoky BBQ Sauce
1/2	cup	margarine
1/2	cup	brown sugar, packed
2	teaspoons	Roasted Garlic Pepper - to taste
1 1/2	tablespoons	Chipotle Sauce - to taste

Melt butter in sauce pan. Add brown sugar and stir until melted. Stir in the rest of the ingredients and simmer for 15 minutes. Can be served immediately, but best if allowed to chill over night.

Note: The chipotle sauce is not the adobo kind that has been discussed on the list in the past. This is the Bufalo (their spelling) brand, "Chipotle Mexican Hot Sauce" that's made in Mexico, and distributed by the Herdez Co. out of Carlsbad, CA. It's labeled as "very hot" but don't believe it! It's pretty mild.

=====

Original CyberSauce

Recipe By : Members Of The BBQ Mailing List

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
		renderings from 1/4 pound bacon
1	large	Canadian onion -- grated
1/2	cup	green bell pepper -- grated
4	cloves	garlic -- minced
1/2	cup	New Mexican chile powder -- ground
2	teaspoons	cumin
2	tablespoons	ground mustard
1	cup	cider vinegar
28	ounces	ketchup
2	teaspoons	nuoc nam
2	tablespoons	Worcestershire sauce
1	teaspoon	lemon peel
1	teaspoon	coarsely ground black pepper
1	teaspoon	ground white pepper
6		chipotles en adobo -- minced
1/2	cup	brown sugar
	pinch	pickling spice
1	teaspoon	crushed rosemary
		juice from 2 lemons
12	ounces	malty beer, low hopped
1/2	cup	Jack Daniel's
		hot pepper sauce -- to taste

Fry bacon and remove from skillet. Sauté onions and green pepper in drippings until onions are translucent. Add garlic and stir for 1 minute. Add chile powder, cumin, and mustard. Cook for two minutes until the kitchen is bursting with aroma. Add remaining ingredients. Bring to boil and reduce heat to low, stirring frequently. Simmer one hour or until it reaches desired thickness. Remove sock before serving.

=====

Belly's 'Kick-Ass' BBQ Sauce -- Texas Style

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	quart	V8 Juice
1	quart	Beef Stock (de-greased)
1/2	cup	yellow mustard
1/2	cup	apple cider
1	cup	dark molasses
1/3	cup	black pepper
1/3	cup	Hungarian Sweet Paprika, fresh
1/4	cup	Worcestershire Sauce
1	big	yellow Onion minced
1	cup	Hatch NM Chiles or any mild chiles roasted and peeled, minced
1/2	cup	pressed Garlic

Mix together V8 juice and beef stock. Then add mustard, cider, molasses, black pepper and paprika as you stir the sauce. Put mixture on stove to simmer. After 1/2 hour, add Worcestershire sauce, minced yellow onion, chiles, and garlic. Let the sauce simmer for about 2 hours in your pit to pick up the good smoke taste. Stir and taste often as it simmers. After about three hours total simmering time, taste and add some salt if needed. If you want it hotter, add some Louisiana Hot Sauce. You can put it in a blender to smooth it out. Let the sauce cool and put it in a gallon jug and let age at least a week in the refrigerator before using.

Serve on the side with Brisket, Ribs, Chicken or over Steak.

=====

Here's the winning recipe from June's "Best of the Web Recipe Contest".

Great Barbecue Sauce. Contributed on-line by Cyndi Whitley.

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1/2	cup	cider vinegar
1/4	cup	water
1	cup	chopped onion
1	small	lemon (unpeeled), cut into thin strips
1/4	cup	packed light brown sugar
2	tablespoons	prepared mustard
1	tablespoon	Worcestershire sauce
2	teaspoons	salt
1/4	teaspoon	red pepper flakes, crushed
1	Dash	hot pepper sauce (like Tabasco), to taste
1	cup	tomato catsup
1/4	cup	chili sauce

- In a large saucepan, mix the vinegar and water. Stir in the onion, lemon, sugar, mustard, Worcestershire sauce, salt, red pepper flakes, and hot pepper sauce.
- Stir over medium-high heat until the mixture comes to a rolling boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Check and stir occasionally.
- Stir in the catsup and chili sauce. Increase the heat and return the sauce to a full boil. Remove the sauce from the heat and let cool about 15 minutes before using.

4. This makes a great barbecue sauce for brushing on steaks and chicken--use lemon strips and all! Cover and marinate in the refrigerator for at least an hour before grilling. Baste the meat with additional sauce while grilling. Serve hot off the grill with extra sauce for dipping. Yields about 1 pint.

[How about some sauces for pulled pork?]

Tom Solomon--
Here's a BBQ sauce I came up with while fooling around in the kitchen on a rainy Sunday afternoon in the Virginia mountains.

Silver Pig Style Hot Table Sauce

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
9	teaspoons	malt vinegar
7	teaspoons	water
3	teaspoons	cayenne pepper
3	teaspoons	paprika
2	teaspoons	nuoc nam
1 1/2	teaspoons	Texas Pete hot sauce
1 1/2	teaspoons	black pepper
1/2	teaspoon	garlic powder
1/2	teaspoon	onion powder

This is an approximation of the hot table sauce served at the Silver Pig North Carolina-style barbecue restaurant in Madison Heights, Virginia. If you don't have nuoc nam (Vietnamese or Thai fish sauce), add one more teaspoon each of malt vinegar and water, and substitute one teaspoon of salt in lieu of the nuoc nam.

Simply combine all ingredients, shake well, and let sit. Give the bottle a good shake before using.

=====
Tommy Bowen--
This is my pulled pork sauce. A little sweet, a little tart, and everyone here loves it.

Tommy Bowen's Pulled Pork BBQ Sauce

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
32	ounce	cheap ketchup
2/3	cup	apple cider vinegar
1	cup	sugar
1	stick	margarine
1	cup	lemon juice
2	teaspoons	black pepper
2	tablespoons	crushed red pepper (red pepper flakes)

Put in a pot and bring to a boil. Keeps for weeks (months even) in the fridge. Good stuff.

=====
Tom Solomon--

Here's a Lexington North Carolina style barbecue finishing sauce I've come up with. It's a mild version, and pretty straightforward. If you don't have nuoc nam, substitute 2 teaspoons of salt.

Lexington-Style Finishing Sauce

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
2	cups	white vinegar
2	cups	apple cider vinegar
2	cups	water
1/3	cup	ketchup
1/8	cup	Texas Pete Hot Sauce
1	tablespoon	sugar
1	tablespoon	red pepper flakes
2	teaspoons	nuoc nam

Mix ingredients and simmer on low heat for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Use as a finishing sauce for pulled pork barbecue.

=====

Editor--Here's some more--

Eastern North Carolina-Style Barbecue Sauce

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	cup	distilled white vinegar
1	cup	cider vinegar
1	tablespoon	sugar
1	tablespoon	crushed red pepper flakes
1	tablespoon	hot red pepper flakes
		Salt and ground pepper to taste

Mix all ingredients, including salt and pepper, to taste, in medium bowl.

Adapted from a recipe in Chris Schlesinger and John Willoughby's "The Thrill of the Grill" (Morrow, 1990), this is a classic pepper-spiked vinegar sauce. Use on pulled pork.

=====

Mid-South Carolina Mustard Sauce

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	cup	cider vinegar
6	tablespoons	Dijon mustard
2	tablespoons	maple syrup or honey
4	teaspoons	Worcestershire sauce
1	teaspoon	hot red pepper sauce
1	cup	vegetable oil
2	teaspoons	salt
1	dash	ground black pepper

Mix all ingredients, including pepper to taste, in medium bowl.

The pulled pork tossed in this mustard sauce was the hands-down favorite at a recent party. Though we prefer the flavor of Dijon mustard in this sauce, feel free to substitute other mustards to suit your taste.

Western South Carolina-Style Barbecue Sauce

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	tablespoon	vegetable oil
1/2	medium	onion, minced
2	medium	garlic cloves, minced
1/2	cup	cider vinegar
1/2	cup	Worcestershire sauce
1	tablespoon	dry mustard
1	tablespoon	dark brown sugar
1	tablespoon	paprika
1	teaspoon	salt
1	teaspoon	cayenne pepper
1	cup	ketchup

Heat oil in 2-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and garlic; sauté until softened, 4-5 minutes. Stir in all the remaining ingredients except ketchup; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, then add ketchup. Cook, stirring occasionally, until thickened, about 15 minutes.

Served originally at Mama Rosa's, a long-time barbecue pit restaurant in North Philadelphia, this recipe is adapted from Jim Tarantino's outstanding book "Marinades" (Crossing Press, 1992).

[My understanding is that sauces with catsup and sugar in them would burn horribly if added at the beginning of grilling or barbecuing. Does anyone have anything to say about that?]

Rick Thead--

You're right. However, if the sauce is thin enough, then it'll run off and there won't be enough sugar to burn. Generally, a tomato or sugar-based sauce should be put on at the end of cooking, for just a few minutes.

[Can you put something other than water in the water pan in my smoker?]

Editor--

You sure can. List members report putting wine, fruit juices, beer, spices, Coca Cola and Dr. Pepper. There is some controversy about the beer though, some say it's a waste of good brew. The wine, fruit juices and water with spices can add some flavor to what you're smoking, but most say it's pretty subtle.

10. We're smoking meats here

Editor--

I have included in this section of the FAQ several methods from different barbecuers for each major type of barbecue meat to show that there is more than one way to get good barbecue.

10.1. Pork

10.1.1. Ribs

 [I want to barbecue some pork ribs. Can you tell me about the different kinds of ribs and how to barbecue them?]

Harry Jiles--- (Editor--Harry is a pig farmer and knows a thing or two about pork.)

There are basically three types of pork ribs, these are: spare ribs; baby back ribs; and country style ribs. Let's take a look at each type of rib.

Spare ribs are the traditional slab of ribs. They come from the belly of the pig, behind the shoulder. They include 11 to 13 long bones. There is a covering of meat on top of the bones and between them. They are the most inexpensive cut of ribs. St. Louis style ribs are a variation of the full slab. They are trimmed and have the brisket bone removed. Kansas City style ribs are another variation. They are trimmed even more than the St. Louis style ribs and have the hard bone removed.

Baby back ribs, sometimes called loin ribs, are cut from the loin section. They are shorter and smaller than spareribs. They have a covering of meat over the bones and also between them. Because they do come from the loin, they are leaner and meatier than spare ribs. They are also considerably more expensive and in shorter supply.

Country style ribs are actually not ribs at all but are cut from the blade end of the loin, right behind the upper portion of the pork shoulder. They are more like fatty pork chops than ribs. While they have more fat per pound than any of the other styles of ribs, the fat is in layers and the meat between those layers is leaner and less marbled than most other ribs. They are the meatiest of all the ribs.

Now that you know what the different rib styles are, which are the best to barbecue? A good question, which has no good answer.

First, country style ribs, because they are more like pork chops, are better for grilling than slow cooking, although they can be slow barbecued quite successfully if one keeps a close watch on them and gets them out of the smoker as soon as they are done.

Spare ribs are inexpensive and full of flavor and are probably the best choice for novice barbecuers. You won't feel near as bad if you mess up a rack of spare ribs as you will if you mess an expensive rack of baby backs. Some barbecuers, myself included, actually prefer spare ribs such as the St. Louis or Kansas City style over baby backs because they have more flavor, more meat and cost less.

Because they are the leanest of the ribs, baby backs are less messy to eat than the other ribs. They are also easier to handle than spare ribs, because they are smaller. Some barbecuers will cook nothing but baby

backs and there is no question that they are excellent eating when prepared to perfection. They have a naturally sweeter flavor than spare ribs. They are more expensive than spare ribs and because they are leaner, they can be more prone to be overcooked and therefore are somewhat less forgiving to the chef. You will have to make up your own mind if they are worth the extra cost.

Smoking ribs is not at all difficult. Following are some general guidelines for cooking ribs.

If you choose spare ribs, get well trimmed ribs, such as the St. Louis style. Spare ribs also have a membrane on the bone side of the ribs. While it is not necessary to remove this membrane, the rendered fat will get away from the meat better if you remove it. The ribs will also absorb a rub or sauce better when it is removed. To remove it, carefully work the point of a blunt knife or a screwdriver under the membrane to loosen it and start to lift it from the bones. Once you have it started, you can work your fingers under it to completely separate it and tear it away.

Season both sides of the ribs generously with your favorite dry rub. If you wish, you can also marinate your ribs with a variety of liquids before seasoning. This is purely a matter of taste, as ribs cooked correctly do not need a marinade to help tenderize them. Marinades can easily overpower the true taste of the pork.

Put the ribs bone side up on the smoker grates. You can really pile a lot of ribs in a smoker if you rotate them once in a while to make sure they receive an even amount of smoke and heat. Make sure there is no flame or burning wood or charcoal under the ribs. Indirect heat is the absolute best way to cook ribs.

Most racks of ribs of 3 pounds and under will be done in approximately 3.5 to 4 hours at 200 to 225F. If the ribs are extra plump and thick it can help to bump the temperature to 250F. Baby backs will take 30 to 45 minutes less. In any case, the ribs are done when the meat is tender and will easily pull away from the bone. When they reach that point, take them out immediately.

You can poke the ribs with a fork to see how tender they are or you can gently pull and/or twist on a couple of the bones in a slab. If the ribs are done, the bone will pull away from the meat easily. After a while, you will develop a feel for doneness and you will be able to tell by just poking them with a finger.

If you wish to baste your ribs with barbecue sauce, don't do so until the last 30-40 minutes of cooking time, so the sauce does not burn on the meat. Turn the ribs over so the meat side is up and then baste with your favorite sauce. Again, this is a matter of taste, whether you want your ribs wet or dry.

As far as wood for smoking, use whatever suits your personal tastes. Hickory, oak, apple and maple are some of the commonly used woods for smoking ribs. Some like to use a combination of woods for additional flavor. I like to keep smoke on my ribs for the entire cooking period and that again, is a matter of personal taste.

Ribs are one of the traditional barbecue meats and probably on just about everybody's short list of favorite foods. So don't wait any longer. Fire up the smoker and put on some ribs. And put on a lot of ribs because all of your neighbors downwind of your smoker will probably be coming by to visit.

[Harry, what's the difference between a rack of ribs and a slab of ribs?]

I am not sure myself, but I think it is just a matter of terminology. I have always referred to the whole rib section of one side as a 'slab'. I think 'rack' is a term that the restaurant industry came up with to refer to the trimmed slabs that they usually use. Therefore, a rack is something less than a slab and how much less depends on how well trimmed it is. It seems as the two terms are somewhat ambiguous and mean different things to different folks. I am not sure if there is any set-in-stone definition.

=====

Danny Gaulden on ribs--(Editor--Danny is the proprietor of a very successful eating establishment featuring BBQ in Carlsbad, NM and has been smoking meat for over 20 years. I tried to tell him that the meat don't take that long to smoke, but Danny's kind of set in his ways and he just keeps on smoking it!)

Ah...Spare Ribs, definitely one of my favorites. A lot of argument has been posted on this list over the past year on ribs. Should one buy baby backs, spares, or what? I personally like spares; especially the St. Louis cut, which is hard to find. Got lucky for several months, and was able to get them, but it looks like that road has come to an end. What is a St. Louis cut? It is basically a 3 1/2 and down that has the ends trimmed off, the bone off the side, and very seldom much of a flap. A Great rib. The term '3 1/2 and down' means that the slab of ribs will weigh 3 1/2 pounds or less.

How do you pick a good slab of ribs? Well, it is sometimes hard to do, considering the way most grocery stores package them today. They can be all folded up with the "bad" parts hidden. Either go to a butcher shop that will let you hand pick your slab, or ask the butcher at your favorite grocery store to let you pick out some that are not already packaged. If he won't allow you to do this, find another store. Pick a slab that is nice and thick, and has a little marbling on the meat side.

After you get them home, do some work on them yourself. I cut off the side bone that runs length-wise near one end of the slab, and trim off the skin running along the top of the flap on the bone side. Simply take a knife, hold the flap up with one hand, and cut about 1/4 inch deep all the way across it to remove the skin. With bone side up, and slab placed flat on cutting board so that bones are running in a vertical position, take a good sharp knife and make vertical cuts in flap about every 1/2 inch. Cut from the top of flap down to where it connects to the main body of the rib. Sometimes you will get lucky, and there will be no side bone, and very little flap and skin. Why do this procedure to the ribs? Usually the flap area takes longer to cook than the main body of the ribs. This procedure reduces the cooking time of the flap, and lets it get done at the same time as the rest of the slab. I have seen a lot of people overcook their ribs waiting for the flap part to finish off. If they had done this procedure, that wouldn't have happened. I do not remove the membrane on the bone side of the ribs. Never felt a need to. Maybe that's necessary for judging, but for down-home eating, I haven't found that to be the case.

Next thing I do is apply a gentle rub. Now, not a lot, for ribs are not as massive as butts and briskets. A little rub goes a long ways. Don't be afraid of it, but don't over do it. Then wrap'em up in a clear wrap, let sit in refrigerator over night, and barbecue them the next day. If you can't let them sit all night in the refrigerator, the world won't come to an end.

Build your fire and let the ribs sit out of refrigerator while waiting for the fire to come up to temperature. I like to smoke my ribs at 225-235F, and it generally takes about 4 hours. Sometimes a little less, sometimes a little more. Just depends on the ribs.

Let me say a little about the differences in using the various styles of smoking pits. The big commercial pit in my restaurant has a rotating meat rack, like a miniature Ferris wheel inside. The meat is always turning. The temperature is quite uniform and in this situation. I always barbecue ribs with the meat side up and leave them like that until they're done. You can do the same in a water smoker, where the water pan acts as a heat baffle to protect the meat from getting too hot on the bottom. In an off-set firebox pit, like my new Klose Backyard Chef, I'm finding that I have to do something different. In my Klose pit, the heat comes up from below the meat and if the ribs are not turned about once an hour, I find that the side facing down is over-done. So if you're using an off-set firebox pit, like a NBBB or an SnP Pro, turn them ribs.

After the ribs have been in the pit for about an hour, I baste them with a little salad oil, then again after about 2 1/2 to 3 hours. This helps keep them moist since they have no fat cap, and I feel this in an important part of the cooking process. Use a good brand of vegetable oil. When the ribs draw up on the bone about 1/3 of an inch, and the meat between the bones becomes very fork tender, I pull them off the pit, and apply my finishing glaze immediately. By applying the glaze while the ribs are still piping hot, it will caramelize on them, and give a beautiful dark cherry-red color. They taste pretty good too!

If your fire gets out of hand and the temperature goes up to 250-275F, the ribs will draw up more on the bone, so always judge doneness by the tenderness of the meat, not draw up on bones. At cooler smoking temperatures the meat will draw up less. It's that simple!

Danny's Rib and Pork Finishing glaze:

Mix the following ingredients together: 1/3 cup brown sugar, 1/3 cup yellow mustard, and 1/4 to 1/3 cup apple cider vinegar. Then heat in a sauce pan until it simmers and let it sit until the ribs are ready to baste.

The great thing about smoking ribs is that they don't take all day to barbecue, are one of America's favorite barbecue items, and look wonderful when sliced and stacked on a serving tray. Other quick and attractive things to go with your ribs and give a great presentation, are barbecued chicken halves or quarters, and a good sausage. Stack them all together on a large platter, serve with beans, slaw, potato salad, hot bread, and a few slices of onions and pickles. Boy, good things will start to happen to you!

[I've heard that Memphis has some great BBQ ribs. Can you tell me how to do this style rib on my grill?]

Richard Young--
Memphis Hogaholics Award-Winning Ribs

I used to live in Memphis and barbecue is real big there. This recipe is from the Memphis-In-May Barbecue Contest.

What you need is: 2 slabs pork spare ribs, a dry rub, some basting sauce and a wet finishing sauce.

Rub dry--rub mix onto both sides of skinned ribs. Place meat on the grill away from coals, bone side down. Cook ribs 1-1/2 to 2 hours, never turning, before using basting sauce. Cook slowly for 3-1/2 to 4-1/2 hours, basting every 45 minutes to one hour. Serve with Wet Finishing sauce on the side, or (not recommended by purists) baste with the sauce during the last 1/2 hour of cooking.

Memphis Hogaholics Award-Winning Ribs Dry Rub

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	tablespoon	lemon peel
1	tablespoon	garlic powder
1	tablespoon	onion powder
1	tablespoon	chili powder
1	tablespoon	paprika
1	tablespoon	MSG
1/2	tablespoon	black pepper
1/2	tablespoon	cayenne pepper
1/2	tablespoon	white pepper
2	tablespoons	salt
2	tablespoons	sugar

Mix together.

Memphis Hogaholics Award-Winning Ribs Basting Sauce

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	quart	vinegar
1	pint	water
1/2	small can	chili peppers
1	cup	prepared mustard
1-1/4	cup	brown sugar
1/2	stick	butter
1/2	bottle	root beer

Combine first four ingredients in a saucepan and mix well. Cook very slowly for 1 hour. Add sugar, butter, and root beer to mixture and slow boil for 30 minutes. Recommended for pork and game.

Memphis Hogaholics Award-Winning Ribs Wet Finishing Sauce

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
5	ounces	dark soy sauce
24	ounces	tomato juice
5	ounces	Worcestershire sauce
12	ounces	catsup
1	cup	apple cider vinegar
1	cup	brown sugar
		juice of 1 lemon
1	teaspoon	red pepper
1	teaspoon	black pepper
1	teaspoon	dry mustard
1/2	teaspoon	garlic powder
1/2	teaspoon	onion powder
1/2	teaspoon	oregano
1/2	teaspoon	allspice
1/2	teaspoon	ginger
1/2	teaspoon	basil

Mix all ingredients in a saucepan and simmer for 1 hour. Let sauce stand for 2 hours before serving on the side with barbecue.

The thing about this recipe is that it will depend on your smoker or grill and the size of your ribs. Memphis barbecue is over an extremely low fire so that the meat cooks very slowly. If you cannot do this on your grill, you'll have to adjust your cooking time accordingly. This is the original recipe and the time to cook it in a smoker pit is approximately 6 hours. However, I cannot do this on my grill because it's a gas grill and it's too hot. This is what I do. I place the ribs on one side of the grill only, I turn the burner on the other half of the grill on low. I place a smoker box over the flame with wood chips. Using this method, I can stretch out the cooking time to about 2 hours max. But it's worth the fuss. The ribs are so moist and falling apart on the inside with a nice crust on the outside.

One more piece of advice. If you have a small grill and are doing a lot of meat for a big gang, here is something I do in that situation. I cook everything in batches until nearly done, then transfer to baking pans and keep in warm oven while I start the next batch. Since the majority of cooking was done on the grill, the effect is the same. Also, seal the pans of ribs with foil when you put in the oven; grilled ribs dry out quickly in the oven.

[What's the best way to smoke beef or pork ribs on my electric water smoker?]

Jeff Lipsitt--
Smoking Beef And Pork Ribs On An Electric Water Bullet

I usually start this at 1 PM so we're eating at 5 or 6 PM. Sometimes we'll do a slab of each. Pinto beans and coleslaw are our favorite sides.

Cut and remove the membrane from the bones as best you can. At least separate each rib so they're being held together by meat, not the membrane.

Make a dry rub out of paprika (Hungarian sweet), brown sugar, garlic powder, pepper, salt, chili powder and cayenne, about 1 tablespoon of each should do it.

Rub the ribs really well, put them into a plastic bag and refrigerate them overnight. Make Danny Gaulden's Mustard Glaze (see Danny's article in the Ribs section) at the same time and put it in the refrigerator, too. Then pour some Balsamic vinegar in a spray bottle.

An hour before smoking, let meat, glaze, and sauce come to room temperature. Also, start soaking hickory chips at that time.

Plug in the electric bullet. Put 3 inches of hot water in the water pan. Put the smoking wood chips in foil with big (nickel sized) holes and put them next to the electric element.

When you've got good smoke, put ribs on the grills, bone side down. Every 30 minutes put in new bag of chips for nice heavy smoke. After 2 hours, I spray the tops of the ribs with the Balsamic vinegar. Repeat every hour.

Total smoking time is 4 hours at about 200F.

Before taking the ribs off, I heat the glaze a bit in the microwave oven. Get out a huge platter and foil it. Move the ribs to the platter and immediately glaze them.

Cut the ribs up individually and pig out!

10.1.2. Picnics and butts

[Can somebody tell me about pork shoulders and how to barbecue them?]

Harry Jiles--

The pork shoulder, which is the entire front leg and shoulder of the pig, is another of the traditional pork barbecue meats. The shoulder, or a portion of it, is usually used for pulled pork barbecue. Pulled pork is meat that is cooked so tender that the individual fibers of the meat can easily be pulled apart with your fingers.

A pork shoulder is tailor made for barbecuing. Pork takes on smoke as readily as any meat there is, and there is enough fat in a shoulder to baste the meat and keep it moist during the long slow cooking process. Yet when the meat is done, almost all of the fat will have been rendered off, leaving wonderfully tender tasty pork. A whole shoulder usually weighs around 12-18 lbs. It might be difficult to find a whole shoulder in a supermarket. You might have to order one or go to a butcher or locker plant to find one. If you can't find a whole shoulder, don't despair. The shoulder is usually cut into two pieces, which are the Boston butt and the picnic. These can be easily found in supermarket coolers.

The Boston butt is from the upper part of the pork shoulder and has the least bone. Yep, you heard right, a pork butt comes from the upper portion of the front leg of the pig. I know that doesn't sound right, but that is the way it is. A butt usually weighs 6-8 lbs. A Boston butt is an excellent choice for pulled pork barbecue.

The picnic is the bonier lower part of the shoulder. It, too, usually weighs about 6-8 lbs. It may have the bone in it or the bone removed and rolled and tied. Both are excellent for pulled pork barbecue, but there is an old saying that the meat nearest the bone is the sweetest, so many barbecuers prefer the bone in. The meat of the picnic has a slightly different flavor than the butt, more like ham.

Following are some general guidelines for smoking shoulders, butts or picnics.

Whole shoulders, butts and picnics can be barbecued "nekid" (no rub or mop) or using your favorite rub and/or mop. Your personal tastes and preferences will have to dictate whether you use a rub or mop or don't mop. Experienced barbecuers can argue for hours about the best method and no one method is right or wrong. I would suggest trying all these methods, over time, and make your own choice about which you like best.

If you use a rub, apply it the night before or at least 8 hours before you plan to cook. Massage the rub into the meat well and place in a plastic bag suitable for food use and refrigerate. Take your meat out of the refrigerator an hour before you start cooking and pat it down with another coat of the rub.

Put the meat into your smoker and cook using indirect heat and a temperature of 200 to 225F. If you use a mopping sauce, mop the meat about every hour. Before cooking, sauces and marinades can be injected into the meat for flavor but they are not necessary for either tenderizing or maintaining moisture.

Use whatever wood you prefer to use. Hickory, oak, apple, maple and pecan are commonly used. Some cooks use a combination of woods for more flavor. The amount of time you keep smoke on your shoulders, butts and picnics is another topic of debate among barbecuers, but I would suggest you keep smoke on the meat for at least 6 hours.

Cook for approximately 1.5 hours per pound. Some barbecuers prefer to finish their meat by wrapping it in foil and putting it back in the smoker for a couple of hours and then unwrapping it. Poke holes in the bottom of the foil so fat and liquids can get away and finish for an hour to firm up the outside crust. Other barbecuers won't ever use foil. Again, this is not necessary and is a matter of taste. Wrapping in foil can give you some added control of moisture, especially if you are cooking several different sized cuts of meat and want them to all come off the cooker at the same time. Be forewarned; when you unwrap a shoulder, butt, or picnic from the foil, the meat will usually be falling apart, so handle it carefully.

Shoulders, butts, and picnics are done when the meat is literally falling apart. Internal temperatures will be 170 to 180F. Very carefully remove your meat from the smoker and let sit 15-20 minutes and then pull it apart. Properly cooked shoulders, butts and picnics should never need a knife to cut up the meat. They should easily pull apart. Remove any remaining fat, gristle and bone.

The pulled meat can be eaten alone or put on a plain white bun and a finishing sauce applied to the meat, which is the traditional pulled pork barbecue method. There are many different finishing sauces and you should try as many of them that you can.

Properly prepared pulled pork barbecue is "to die for" and will win you many friends at a cook-out or reunion. Give it a try.

[I've heard that many chefs are now serving pork pink. My mother always told me to cook pork until it is well done. What's the story here?]

Harry Jiles--

This section answers questions and concerns that some persons have on internal temperatures for safely cooking pork.

Many people still basically overcook their pork because of fears of trichinosis, so let's get the facts straight on that matter first. It is highly unlikely that trichinae would be present in today's commercially produced pork. Trichinae could be present in wild animals, but even with them, it is still a rarity. You have a higher probability of choking to death on a piece of commercially produced pork than you do of contracting trichinosis from it. Even in the highly unlikely event that trichinae were present in a piece of pork, they would be killed at an internal temperature of 137F. This is well below the recommended internal temperature of 160F from the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC).

As I stated above, the NPPC recommends an internal temperature of 160F. Pork cooked to this temperature will still be pink inside and the juices will run clear if it is pierced with a fork. Do not be afraid of pork that is still pink. Pork that is still pink in the center will be much juicier and flavorful than overcooked pork. The 160F temperature is recommended to kill bacteria that might be present on the meat. Since almost all of any bacteria that might be present would be on the surface of the meat, if it is not ground meat, you actually do not always have to cook to 160F for safety and, in fact, some cooks only cook pork to around 140F. If the cut of meat has been properly handled and stored so that there is no excessive growth of bacteria on the meat, this practice is perfectly safe and acceptable and actually preferred by many people.

Keep in mind that the internal temperatures that we are talking about above are mainly for naturally lean and tender cuts of pork, such as the loin and loin chops. These cuts do not really need the long slow barbecue cooking process to tenderize them and can actually suffer in quality if cooked as long as you would cook other traditional barbecue cuts of pork. They are best taken off as soon as they reach the above mentioned temperatures so they will not be too dry.

To recap the proper temperatures for safety: Always cook ground pork to 160F to kill any bacteria in the meat. If you are concerned about bacteria in cuts of pork, cook to 160F. If you are grilling or smoking pork loin or loin chops, and you want them as juicy and flavorful as possible, and they have been stored and handled correctly so bacterial growth is not a concern, cook them to 140F.

Editor--I heard on a TV cooking show that no case of trichinosis has been reported in the US in over 30 years.

=====

Danny Gaulden-- On smoking a pork butt.

Pork butts are wonderful cuts of meat to barbecue, and one of my favorites. As so many on the list have said, "they are very forgiving", and a great choice of meat for a novice at barbecue to start with. Why? Mainly because of the fat marbling they have, plus just plain great flavor. If you undercook one just a bit, it may be a little tough, but still eatable; if you over barbecue it, it will still be pretty darn good, and most likely still be moist. Not so with a brisket. Undercooked, it is tough as alligator hide, overcooked it is dry, crumbly, and tasteless. So a butt is a great piece of meat to barbecue in a larger cut. Plus it's not very expensive.

Choosing a butt is not that difficult. Most come in the 6 to 9 lb. range. I like 'em about 7 lbs. or so. A nice fat cap of about 1/4 to 1/3 inch is good, and try to pick one with some marbling in the meat itself. Sometimes butts can be too fat, so be careful. You want a fat cap and marbling, but not too much.

I like to start it out the same as a brisket. Generously apply a rub on it, wrap in clear wrap, place in refrigerator overnight, and barbecue it the next day. Set the butt out of refrigerator about 30 minutes before putting it in the smoker, while you're building the fire in your pit. Re-work the rub into butt while waiting for fire to get up to temperature. If you don't want to use any additional seasonings at this point, fine. Most do, some don't.

When the smoker temperature reaches 210 to 225F, place the butt in pit fat side up and smoke until extremely fork tender. Putting it fat side up lets the natural fat juices work over and through the meat and acts as a natural mop. As with smoking ribs, I have found that if I'm using an off-set firebox pit, I need to turn the meat. For a pork butt or picnic, turn and mop it every two hours. If you're using a water smoker, you can leave it fat cap up all the time, just mop it every two hours. I like to smoke at 210 to 220F constantly. This generally takes about 70 minutes a pound, or 8 1/2 to 9 hours for a 7 1/2 pound butt.

The pork butt should come out of the pit when it is "fork tender". Not long ago, I measured the internal temperature of a bunch of pork butts smoked in my commercial pit. Here's is what I found:

For a sliceable pork roast, take it out at 180F.
 For a sliceable and pullable roast, take it out at 185F.
 For an easily pullable roast, take it out at 190F.

After you take it out of the pit, let it cool for 30 minutes or so. DO NOT fork the butt in the fat area to check for doneness. This will be misleading, for the fat will become tender way before the meat (muscle) around the bone area. Always check for doneness in the meat area under or around the bone. If you are not going to eat the butt within the first hour after barbecuing, double wrap it in foil, set it in a non-drafty area, or a small ice chest (no ice in chest), and let sit until it's time for dinner. As long as the butt stays between 140 to 160F internally, it will not spoil. Check with a meat thermometer every once in awhile, or stick thermometer into meat after wrapping in foil so that you can periodically monitor the internal temperature.

Sometimes I like to apply a finishing glaze on the butt as soon as it comes off the pit. It is the same one I use on my ribs, and has become very popular with many folks on the list. As soon as the butt is off pit, baste it once with the glaze. Then let it stand a couple of minutes, and baste again. Then either let the pork sit a few minutes before preparing it for the table (you don't want to cut it while it is too hot, for it will be difficult to handle, and turn brown), or store as stated above.

Smoking times will vary depending on how accurate a fire tender you are, how often you open your pit to take a peek, and the natural tenderness of the meat in the raw state. These times are just general guidelines and will most likely vary every time you barbecue.

 [Can you tell me some more about making authentic Eastern North Carolina Pulled Pork?]

Tom Solomon--

I'm originally from North Carolina but now live in Virginia; I grew up in Greensboro about a mile from Stamey's Pit-Cooked Barbeque restaurant (Lexington style barbecue) but later in life became a convert to Eastern North Carolina style barbecue (apple cider vinegar and red pepper).

While this is hardly definitive, this is how I do it.

Tom's Eastern North Carolina Style Barbecue

First, get yourself some pork shoulders or Boston Butt roasts, as many as your smoker will hold comfortably. I use a Brinkmann SnP Pro. It has an off-set firebox, but you can do this with a vertical water smoker as well. The key is providing a moist, smoky, indirect heat for a long period of time.

What I do is put a bag of charcoal in the firebox, open the vents, light it, and let it burn down to coals. Then I add wood (generally oak, since hickory is scarce up here)--two parts wet (soaked) wood to one part dry--regulate the dampers, and put the shoulders or butts, fat side up, in the cooking chamber. Beneath the meat I put a drip pan half-filled with apple cider vinegar. You must keep the heat between 180-260F throughout the smoking process; the optimum range is 220-240F. Normally, I'll add apple wood to the firebox as well, and I always add between 5-7 whole heads of garlic during the process. Keep the firebox fed and a good smoke going for between 8 to 10 hours. Do not open the cooking chamber to baste the meat--the only time you open the cooking chamber is when the temperature spikes above 260F, and you open it only long enough to bring the temperature back in the proper range. By the time the smoking period is finished, the outside of the pork will have a golden amber to dark-brown crust.

Now, take the meat and put it in a covered Dutch oven. If it's too dark outside to continue, preheat your indoor oven to just under 300F; otherwise, just raise the temperature in the cooking chamber a like amount. Get a quart-sized Mason jar; fill it halfway with apple cider vinegar, add one (or more) teaspoons of red pepper flakes, and fill the rest of the jar with water. Dump this into the Dutch oven with the pork, cover, and cook until the meat falls from the bone, about 2 more hours or so.

When the meat is done, let it cool a bit. (If you're too tired, you can stop here for the day--cover 'em up, put them in the fridge, and warm 'em up the next morning and continue the procedure.) While it's cooling, fill some 16 ounce bottles with apple cider vinegar, adding about a teaspoon of red pepper flakes to each one (I use Grolsch beer bottles with those pull-down caps, any excuse for buying good beer...). When the pork has cooled enough to handle (I use latex gloves) pull it into thumb-sized chunks, discarding as much fat as possible. Pack roughly 3 pounds of barbecue into a large frying pan (I use a Number 10 size cast iron skillet). Dissolve 1 tablespoon of salt into 2 1/2 cups of warm water and pour it into the pan. Add about 12 ounces of your apple cider vinegar and red pepper sauce, turn the heat to medium, and let the liquid slowly simmer off, stirring frequently, until the sauce just barely oozes over the top of your spatula when you press down on the barbecue with it. Remove from heat, and congratulate yourself--you've just made a fine batch of Eastern North Carolina Style Barbecue.

10.1.3. Whole ham

[I'm trying my first whole ham in the smoker over-night. Any thoughts on this?

Danny Gauden--

Cut off the skin (this lets the smoke penetrate more), but leave the fat. Put a basic rub on it. If you don't have one handy, some salt, pepper, and a little garlic will work just fine. Cook slow at 220-225F, and keep the smoke going fairly often. I like to barbecue mine until the internal temperature reaches 175F or higher. Remember, this isn't as lean as a pork loin, so you can go to a higher temperature. Makes it really tender if you bring it up easy. About 30 minutes before it's done, baste a couple of times with my rib glaze.

10.1.4. Pork chops

[I've toughened up many a pork chop over the past year. Can anyone tell me how to slow cook pork chops?]

Ed Pawlowski--

Pork chops are lean and that makes them touchy. A little too much heat and they are tough. I use chops at least 3/4" thick, an inch or a little more is even better. Keep an eye on them and take them off as soon as the internal temperature is high enough for them to be cooked. I go no more than about 155 to 160F.

Harry Jiles--

Thicker is definitely better for pork chops, especially loin chops. Ed is 100% correct about not over-cooking them. Pork chops are not forgiving about cooking a little longer than necessary. If you do as Ed says and monitor them closely as they approach getting done and take them off as soon as they are done you should get some great chops. Another trick you can try is to place them on a rack over a pan of water or other liquid. A broiler pan will work well for this. They will not take on as much smoke, but it will help keep them from drying out.

Kurt Lucas--

A simple but VERY tasty way to do pork chops is to get 3/4" thick chops and marinate them in olive oil, lots of sliced garlic and fresh thyme sprigs. Let them marinate for 24 to 48 hours. Remove from olive oil and wipe off the oil, thyme sprigs and garlic. Smoke at about 250-275F until just done (160F internal temperature). Once you try this you'll never want to do it any other way. I promise.

Bill Wight--

Try smoking a whole pork loin. Then just slice off a 'chop'. Give the loin a good dry rub for pork (add a good amount of paprika for color). Wrap it in clear plastic wrap and let it sit overnight in the refrigerator. Smoke it at 220-240F for about 3-4 hours. Use hickory chips for the smoke. I use a Polder digital thermometer and take the meat off when it reaches 145F internal temperature. At a temperature above 160F you've got yourself some dry pork. Put a clean drip pan under the meat as it cooks with some water or apple juice in it to catch the drippings use it to make gravy.

10.1.5. The Whole hog

[Where can I learn about smoking a whole hog?]

Rodney Leist--

Here is a Web site that tells how to do it.

<http://www.erc.msstate.edu/hawgs/hawgs.html>

10.1.6. Bacon

{How can I smoke bacon at home?}

Rick Thead has an excellent procedure with photos on his Web page for smoking your own bacon.

<http://www.azstarnet.com/~thead/bbq/>

10.1.7. Sausages

[Can I smoke sausages in my pit?]

Rock McNelly--

After you make or buy sausages, not much better you can do to them but smoke 'em. Put them on the top grill at 220F and give them about 1 to 2 hours, or until the sausage starts to sweat and form little beads of juice on its surface. When the beads cover the surface, the sausages are done, and any more time will start to dry them out. Time will depend on fat content so you'll have to experiment a little. Do them

naked, or give them a pork dry rub. You can marinade them, or give them a mop of beer and fruit juice. You can use any kind of sausage--the sky's the limit here. After you smoke the sausages, you can eat them right out of the smoker, or you can chop them up and put them in your barbecue beans. Chopped up and added to scrambled eggs and you got some kind of breakfast, fit even for a Texan.

10.1.8. Hot dogs

[Can I smoke hot dogs on my BBQ?]

Editor--
No problem. While you're doing that brisket, pork shoulder, ribs or whatever, throw a few (or a lot) hot dogs on the top grill and give them about 30-60 minutes in the smoke (you'll have to experiment a little in your pit to get the perfect time). These will be the very best tasting hot dogs you've ever eaten. Hebrew National brand hot dogs are a favorite in our family.

10.2. Beef

10.2.1. Brisket

Editor--
The Epicurious dictionary defines a brisket as:

"Brisket -----
[BRIHS-kiht] A cut of beef taken from the breast section under the first five ribs. Brisket is usually sold without the bone and is divided into two sections. The flat cut has minimal fat and is usually more expensive than the more flavorful point cut, which has more fat. Brisket requires long, slow cooking and is best when braised. Corned beef is made from brisket."

For Texas-Style barbecued brisket, we use the whole brisket, containing both the 'flat' and the 'point', untrimmed of fat. The typical full brisket weighs in at 8-12 pounds and is about 12-20 inches long and about 12 inches wide. The 'point' is the thicker end and the 'flat' is the thinner end. The deckle end is the 'point' end.

 [How do I BBQ a beef Brisket?]

Billy W. Maynard--

I think that beef brisket belongs to Texas like peanuts to Georgia and pulled pork to North Carolina. Did you know that until about forty years ago, brisket was considered a worthless cut of meat? Most folks would just discard it or grind into hamburger meat. But down in the hill country of Texas, ol' brother Wolf was buying all the brisket he could get to make his chili with. Then about 1950, two German brothers, who had a meat market, begin cooking barbecue in their market to use up leftover meat. So one of them got the idea to smoke a brisket as he was smoking sausage one weekend. So he left the brisket all weekend in his smokehouse. Then on Monday, as they were serving their barbeque--pork, sausage and chicken--he cut a slice off the brisket and put some on each lunch plate. Everyone began telling him how good and tender it was. So with that they began to cook beef brisket for barbecue. So Texas owes the two German meat market brothers from the hills of Texas for our Beef Brisket Barbecue.

Like lots of things, the briskets of today are so much improved over the time of the German brothers. The briskets of old were over half fat, but with the better cattle now, you get lots better beef brisket. But still the only way to make them good and tender is good slow cooking over good hardwood smoke. So here's the way this ol' Texan tries to cook a beef brisket.

Smoking A Beef Brisket

- 1 Pick a well-marbled brisket--one where most of the fat is down in the meat and not all fat on the outside--but you do need a layer of fat on the outside too. Fat inside the meat will help keep it moist, so you still need some fat both on inside and outside, but remember selecting a good brisket is half the technique of good barbecue. Get one in a cry-o-vac package.
- 2 Size of your brisket--a real good size is a brisket from 6 to 10 pounds. The size, big or small, will be more of a personal choice. Just remember slow cooking for 1 1/2 to 2 hours per pound is a pretty fair timetable for cooking a brisket at 225F. But first, ya got to season it!
- 3 Seasoning your brisket--there are as many ideas on the best way to season a brisket as there are brisket cooks. No two will do it the same and very few will do it the same way two times in a row. You can marinate, dry rub or both or sprinkle it with spices or do all three. I myself do a little of it all.
 - 3A Marinate--maybe store bought marinate or maybe your own. I use a mix of Beer, Dr. Pepper, and Willingham's commercial marinade. Just cut a hole in the cry-o-vac package, pour in the marinade and seal the hole with some duct tape. I let the brisket marinate overnight in the refrigerator. Dry it off the next morning and let sit for about half an hour.
 - 3B Dry Rub--I use a mix of Garlic powder, black pepper, salt, cumin, red pepper and a little brown sugar. Almost forgot the paprika; put some on as it gives the brisket a nice color. But there's lots of good dry rubs out there on the market. Try them. So after the brisket sits for 30 minutes, warming up, I give it a good rub with the dry rub mixture. Rub it in good, don't just sprinkle it on.
- 4 Fire--it don't make a big difference on what or how you're cooking as long as you have a good, low, long-time steady heat. It may be wood, electric or gas. I have for the last twenty-five years used a wood fire in everything from a barrel to wash pot to a high dollar pit. I still say you can cook good barbeque in anything, as long as you watch your fire. What you want is a good steady low fire with a temperature between 200/225F at the meat level.
- 5 Smoke-cooking the brisket--Put the brisket on the grill fat side up. I have found that I do better with my brisket if I cook it about an hour per pound on a good low fire of hardwood and then wrap it in foil and put it in a picnic cooler or Styrofoam dry ice chest for up to eight hours (wrap it in some towels for more insulation, so it keeps warm longer). If I slow cook my brisket for 18/20 hours in the smoker my briskets are always too dry for me. But remember, any ol' boy can be like the blind dog and find a better

way to do it. Good smoke will have a sweet flavor and that is what you want, not a bitter flavor. You will get a smoke ring of 1/32 to 1/2 inch most of the time. The presence or absence of a smoke ring don't make a big difference in the taste of your brisket but do make a better looking brisket. Different seasonings will make a difference in the size of your smoke ring.

6 Slicing and Presentation. Last but not to be overlooked, is the presentation of your brisket. I don't care if it just for your wife and kids or your mother-in-law or your boss or if you're in a million dollar cook-off, a brisket that is half bad, will come out extra good if it is sliced and presented just right. Always slice your brisket across the grain of the meat. This is very important, as it will make a more palatable and tender slice of meat. Remember, a good barbecued brisket don't need a sauce poured over it--serve it on the side.

7 Now, that's the way we do it up the Paluxy River in the hills of Texas. Talking about all this makes me want to go cook some BBQ. Beef that is.

[OK. I haven't got a 'real' barbecue smoking pit. Can I make good brisket on my electric water smoker?]

Jeff Lipsitt--

For sure. No question about it.

Rub the brisket the night before (try a commercial rub called Mr. Brown's). Wrap it up and sock it away in the fridge. Next morning, let the meat come to room temperature before putting it in the smoker (about an hour). I fill the water pan of my bullet smoker with HOT water, and bring the temperature up to 225F and throw chips/chunks on the heat source. When it starts to smoke, I put the brisket on a Pam-sprayed grill. Let the meat smoke for 1 1/2 hours (or more) per pound. Keep adding wood chips/chunks every hour or so when the smoke clears. During the last 2 hours, I put the meat in foil and bring up the sides to form a bowl. This catches the juices and the meat bathes in them. It's really simple--don't complicate things. In fact, some will say, just salt and pepper the brisket. The important thing is to smoke it LONG and SLOW. Try to keep the temperature in the cooker at 225F (at the level of the meat) or less--200F is preferable I think.

(Editor--the reason for allowing the meat to come to room temperature is two-fold. It will get up to cooking temperature faster--less fuel required, and putting a cold piece of meat in the smoker can cause creosote to condense on it, making it taste bitter.)

=====
Danny Gaulden--

(Editor--Danny says he's smoked over a hundred thousand briskets in the last 20 years. I tasted some and it was great--the best barbecued brisket I've ever had! The man knows his brisket.)

The first thing one needs to know is how to pick out a good brisket. For home smoking, one in the 8 to 10 pound range works well, and doesn't take as long to barbecue as an 11 to 12 pounder. Look for a brisket that has about 1/4 to 1/3 inch of fat across the top. This is generally called the "fat cap" by most barbecue folks. Don't buy a pre-trimmed piece, for it will not cook as tender, and will be dry. With the brisket lying down and the fat side up, try to pick one that is thick all the way across the flat. This can be hard to do sometimes, for most are thick on one side, and taper down to become fairly thin on the other side. Try to find one that has a more rounded point, rather than a pointed point. Briskets with rounded points tend to be more meaty in this area. Briskets come in two grades, "choice or select". Choice grading costs just a few cents per pound more than select, and generally has more marbling. Either will do well, but choice is usually a little better.

After you have chosen your brisket, generously apply a good rub on it, wrap it in clear wrap, and let it sit in the refrigerator overnight. This will allow the seasoning to work its way into the meat a bit.

The next day, as you are building your fire, bring meat out of the refrigerator and let it sit at room temperature for about 30 minutes. You do not HAVE to apply a second fancy rub at this point. If you don't have one, just use a little salt, pepper, and powdered garlic. You don't have to use any kind of a rub if that is your desire, but I prefer to use one.

After your fire has settled down to around 225-240F, put the brisket in the pit, fat side up and leave it like that the entire time if you're using a pit like my Big Bertha with a Ferris wheel rack system or a water smoker. Now if you're using an off-set firebox type pit, like a NBBB or a Klose, put the brisket on the rack fat side up and then turn it over and mop it every two hours so the bottom side doesn't get too much heat and dry out. While it's with the fat side up, the fat renders and penetrates in, over, and around the cooking meat. When brisket becomes fork tender in the flat, take it off the pit, let it cool for about 30 minutes, then slice and serve. Always check brisket for doneness in the FLAT, not the point. The point will generally become tender before the flat, and can deceive you. Continue to cook until the flat is tender. OK, a lot of folks on the BBQ List asked me what the internal temperature is when I take the brisket out of the pit after I figure they're done. So I measured a bunch of them with a meat thermometer and almost all of them were right at 188F.

If you're not ready to eat it as soon as it's done, double wrap in foil, and set it in a non-drafty place or a small ice chest (no ice) until you are ready to serve it. Don't leave it for too many hours, or you can risk food poisoning. As long as the internal temperature of the meat stays between 140 to 160F, it is safe.

How many hours does one smoke a brisket? This argument will go on till the end of time, and is hard to answer, for there are so many variables. Two people that think they smoked their briskets exactly the same will most likely come out with two totally different finishing times. I like to smoke mine for about 1 to 1 1/4 hours per pound. That would put me at about 10 to 12 1/2 hours for a 10 lb. brisket. No longer. I peg 230F as constantly as possible. Sure, one will have some temperature ups and downs, but I keep it at that temperature fairly well. I don't go off and forget about the fire and I don't open my pit every 10 minutes to "take a peek". I choose a good piece of meat. All these things make a difference in how long the process will actually take. Another thing to take into consideration is the quality of the meat. All briskets are tough, but some are tougher than others. This will have an effect on the overall smoking time also. I have made a few boo-boos in my many years of smoking briskets, but not many. Ninety nine times out of a hundred, they are tender, juicy, smoky, and a piece of meat I am proud to serve to friends and customers.

=====

Garry Howard and Ed Pawlowski--

Red Caldwell is a freelance cook and food writer based in San Marcos, Texas. He is a fifteen-year veteran of competitive cooking--chili cookoffs, barbecue, and mountain oysters. His cookbook, "Pit, Pot, and Skillet", has just been released by Corona Publishing of San Antonio, Texas.

Red's Barbecued Brisket

10 pound beef brisket

Most barbecue in Texas revolves around beef, and more specifically, brisket. When you select your brisket, choose only "packer trimmed" briskets in the ten to twelve pound category. The smaller briskets don't have enough fat to tenderize them, and the larger ones could have come off of a tough old range bull that no amount of cooking will ever tenderize. Avoid closely trimmed or "value packed" brisket pieces. The fat that was cut off to make 'em pretty is the very stuff that would have made them tender! All briskets have a fat cover on one side. Ignore this! Squeeze the thick end with both thumbs. When you've found the brisket with the smallest fat kernel, that's the one for you. Take it home and build your fire. While your fire is getting going--I build mine out of a mixture of mesquite and oak--rub your brisket with a dry "rub." (See Red's Dry Rub recipe below) Make sure that the meat is thoroughly coated. This helps seal the meat, and adds a flavorful crust.

Thoroughly coat all surfaces of the brisket with lemon juice, and rub in well. Sprinkle dry rub generously all over the brisket, rubbing in well. Make sure that the brisket is entirely covered.

When the wood has burned down, move the coals to one side of the pit, place the meat away from the direct heat, fat side up (let gravity and nature do the basting), and close the pit. Some people add a pan of water near the coals to provide added moisture, but I don't. Now, don't touch the meat for 12 hours. Just drink a few beers, cook a pot of beans, and tend your fire.

You'd like to hold the cooking temperature around 210F in the brisket cooking area. Since "helpers" usually show up at the first whiff of smoke, you probably ought to put some of your leftover rub on a couple of racks of pork ribs and toss them on the pit, in the hotter end, and baste and turn 'em for four and five hours, just to keep the animals at bay. Meanwhile, see Red's Prize Winnin' Pintos recipe in the 'side orders' section of this FAQ to keep you busy.

Back at the pit, after the twelve hours are completed, generously slather the brisket with a basting sauce (not a barbecue sauce), wrap it tightly in aluminum foil, and return to the pit. (See Red's Basting Sauce recipe below). Close off all of the air supplies to the fire, and allow the meat to sit in the pit for three or four hours. This really tenderizes the meat.

Serve your brisket with beans, coleslaw, Jalapenos, onions, pickles, and plenty of bread. Cold beer or iced tea are the traditional beverages of choice.

You'll find that a ten-pound brisket will yield about 8-16 servings, depending on the individual brisket, and the size of the appetites of the guests.

=====

Red's Dry Rub

Amount	Measure	Ingredient	Preparation Method
1	11 ounce can	chili powder	-- fine ground, light
1	tablespoon	cayenne pepper	
2	tablespoons	black pepper	
4	tablespoons	garlic powder	
1/2	cup	lemon juice	

Thoroughly coat all surfaces of the meat with lemon juice, and rub it in well. Combine all of the dry ingredients in a bowl, and sprinkle generously all over the meat, rubbing in well. Make sure that the meat is entirely covered. Store leftover rub in a tightly sealed container in the 'fridge.

=====

Red's Basting Sauce

Amount	Measure	Ingredient	Preparation Method
2	tablespoons	chili powder	
1/2	teaspoons	cayenne pepper	
1	pound	butter	
2	each	onions	-- peeled/thick sliced
5	cloves	garlic	-- peeled and crushed
1	bunch	parsley sprigs	-- chopped
1	bottle	beer	
1	pint	vegetable oil	
4	each	lemon	-- quartered

1/4 cup Worcestershire sauce
2 bay leaves

Melt the butter, add the onions and garlic, and sauté for 4 to 5 minutes to soften. Add the beer, squeeze in the lemon juice, and add the lemon rinds to the pot. When the foam subsides, add all of the remaining ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a medium low and simmer for 20 minutes. Keep baste warm, adding beer and oil as needed.

By the way, you'll notice that there are no tomatoes, ketchup, or sugar in this recipe. All of these things caramelize and burn quickly, giving the meat a nasty taste.

[OK, so now I've barbecued my brisket, how do I cut it?]

Jim McGrath--

The brisket you have contains two cuts of meat, the flat and the point. The grains of the two cuts run roughly perpendicular to each other. The flat starts at the thinner end and runs the whole length, dipping under the point, which is the thick fatty hump.

After the brisket is cooked, you will not be able to determine which direction the grain of the flat runs. Cut off a slice of meat at the end of the flat, perpendicular to the grain. This will give you a mark for cutting after the brisket is cooked. Always carve perpendicular to the grain.

Cook the brisket until the flat is fork tender. Trim off the point. Run a carving knife across the surface of the flat, dipping down under the point. There is a layer of fat separating the two cuts, so this is pretty easy to do by feel.

You can now trim the fat off the point and chop up the point meat, or you can return the point to your smoker and continue smoking it for 4 to 6 more hours to render the fat. This will produce the very intensely smoke-flavored "burnt ends".

Danny Gauden--

Before serving brisket, divide it into three pieces. Here's how you do it. Make sure you have a SHARP knife. Now, with lean side of brisket up, cut off the point (deckle end). The reason you want to do this with the lean side up is that it is much easier to see where the point and flat join. Now turn the brisket over with the fat side up and cut off the skirt, flap, whatever you want to call it. The reason for this is that the grain runs in a different direction than the flat and should be separated from it. With the skirt removed, trim the fat off of it, top and bottom and where it is connected to the flat. Don't be surprised if there is a lot of fat--another reason to separate these pieces. Now turn the skirt so that you are cutting against the grain, and make the slices at about a 30 to 45 degree angle. Cut slices off of the point also, going against the grain, and do the same to the flat. Mix the different cuts together, and serve.

[What are "burnt ends" from a brisket?]

Jim McGrath and Danny Gauden--

The burnt ends of a brisket come about two ways. As stated above, they can be made on purpose by returning the point to the smoker for another 4-6 hours and they can result from the thinner parts of the brisket's flat getting overcooked during the smoking process. The burnt ends are usually rather dry and very smoky tasting. These can be served thinly sliced with lots of BBQ sauce or chopped up and used in dishes like chili, stews and soups.

Jeff Lipsitt--

I asked Jake, at Jake's Boss BBQ, certainly one of the best establishment Q'ers in New England, what was his definition of burnt ends.

Here's what he said:

"Traditionally, in Texas, the first cut on the flat and the point were not considered good sandwich or serving pieces. Those pieces were put away until quite a few briskets had produced enough 'first cuts' to chop and mix with BBQ sauce. One day a week, the menu would then feature 'burnt ends'. . . and the price was right!"

Then he went on to say: "Nowadays, because of the popularity of burnt ends, the whole brisket is used. Both the flat and point are roughly chopped and sizzled in a large pan over very high heat for a few minutes before adding BBQ sauce."

 [I over-smoked my first brisket--problems with fire-control. It's a little dry and too smoky in flavor. What can I do with it?]

Danny Gauden--

Now, what to do with that too-smoky brisket. Chop it into small (I mean small) pieces, and marinate it overnight in your favorite barbecue sauce. Of course you know to do this in the refrigerator, not left out overnight. Make sure you use plenty of sauce when mixing the meat with it. Don't make it soupy, but don't make it dry! After letting it rest overnight, take out of the refrigerator and warm up in microwave. Microwave ovens work best here, for they won't burn the pot so to speak, like reheating in a pot can do with this kind of food on a fire. After warming, if the meat seems a little too dry, just add more of your sauce to it. Sometimes it can really soak up the sauce overnight while marinating. Now, just fill a bun with this stuff, and you'll have a great sandwich. Actually an over-smoked brisket works well with this recipe, for the smoke flavor is diminished by the marinating process.

10.2.2. Jerky

 [Is beef jerky better if it's made in a smoker?]

Rick Thead--

I attended the school of hard knocks when it came to jerky on the smoker. I found that the key is to not try to completely dry the meat in the smoker. If you do, the meat will be so smoky that no one will be able to go near it.

I like to spread out the meat, and smoke at just below 150F, rotating the meat strips as they smoke. I smoke it for around 3 hours, and then finish it in a dehydrator. Go light on the smoke.

=====
 Carey Starzinger--

Beef Jerky - Timpson

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
5	pounds	Beef (roast)
1/4	cup	Soy sauce
1	tablespoon	Worcestershire sauce
1	teaspoon	Garlic powder
1	teaspoon	Onion powder
1	teaspoon	Black pepper (cracked if possible)
		Red pepper flakes -- optional
1	tablespoon	Liquid Smoke

I make jerky by buying about 5 pounds of beef. Usually a roast. I then remove the fat. Cut thin strips of meat and place into marinade and let soak for about 24 hours. Remove from marinade and allow to air dry for at least one hour. If you have a meat smoker then omit the liquid smoke and smoke meat at a low temperature. Dry in dehydrator or oven set to lowest temperature setting, about 150F until dry.

=====

Wiley Mixon--

I've been making beef jerky in my American Harvest food dehydrator for about 5 years. Through several experiments I finally got a finished product that I was proud of. That happened when I joined this list. A few days ago someone suggested to smoke the meat strips about 3 hours then finish it up in the dehydrator. Man, that made all the difference in the world. I started with a 10 pound trimmed brisket and cut it into strips. Bought a bottle of Red Creek Jerky Marinade and added 1/2 cup sugar, and to taste, cayenne pepper, crushed red pepper, and coarse ground black pepper. I marinated the meat strips overnight in the fridge. I then smoked them for 3 hours at 200F with mesquite. Finished it up in the dehydrator for 6 hours at 145F. Excellent. Best jerky I've ever made.

=====

Dan M Sawyer

I would like to share a jerky making process that goes back a long way, before refrigerators, before electricity. To the best of my knowledge it has never been written down, just passed along from one old timer to the next - until now.

Dan's Smokehouse Jerky

The Meat:

Generally, the lean scraps from most venison (elk, deer, caribou, antelope and moose) work very good. Bear is greasy, as is pork. Buffalo is similar to beef and makes good jerky. The best cut of beef that will yield the most usable lean meat is the top round. If you like turkey, use large bone-in breasts and remove the bone. The meat should be reasonably aged, at least kept cool for a week or so after it's dressed out and skinned. It is important to trim as much fat off as possible, even if you have to cut it out or scrape it off. The fat will not take salt very well when the meat brines, it will become rancid and grow mold quickly. Cut the meat with the grain, into strips as big around as your thumb (3/4-1" square) and as long as possible.

The Brine:

This is a self-brining method and works in two stages, dehydration and rehydration. The ingredients needed are: kiln-dried medium salt. Most feed stores have 50# bags for about \$3. which will make about eight thousand pounds of jerky. Medium salt is about the size of salt that comes on a pretzel. Molasses--I use Brer Rabbit light or Grandma's. Brer Rabbit comes in pint bottles and have a small top that you can pour a nice 'string' from. Grandma's comes in a large mouth bottle and it's best if you transfer it to some sort of a squeeze top ketchup or pancake syrup bottle (1 pint = about 20 lbs. of meat). Black Pepper, medium grind or coarse - your choice. If you like it hot, use red pepper flakes instead; if you don't like pepper, leave it out.

This brine process goes easier and more quickly if you have a few extra happy hands joining in - the kids, the wife and myself usually make it a project and when it's done everyone gets to pat each other on the back. Anyway, you will need a flat-bottomed non-corrosive container and lid--a Tupperware storage bin, a plastic bus tray or a stainless steam table pan will work well. The size depends on the amount of meat and the room in your refrigerator--the lids keep things out and are handy for stacking the containers. Salt the bottom of the pan evenly, making sure to get in the corners as well. This may not be as easy as it sounds. Put a few pounds of salt in a bowl, cup your fingers together and scoop out about a half a handful--not in your palm. Shake your hand back and forth across the top and about a foot above the top of the pan. As the salt starts to leave your hand, slowly open your fingers and let the salt run through

evenly. Hand salting may require some practice. Practice salting the bottom of the pan until it becomes comfortable and the coverage is without gobs or streaks or voids. If this method becomes too frustrating, a shaker top jar works too--a mayonnaise jar with the metal lid poked full of holes by a 16 penny nail. The coverage amount should be between light coverage (barely covering) and full coverage (completely covering)--the only comparison I can think of is sugar on a pie crust or sugar on your cereal. You don't want it too salty, so one might consider their first batch of jerky experimental and take it from there.

String the molasses. Same kind of deal as the salt; hold the bottle about a foot above the pan, start moving it from side to side and pour. When the molasses starts running try to get a 'string' about the size of a pencil lead and let it crisscross the pan bottom over the salt. Once the strings are even in one direction, change directions (perpendicular) and string evenly across again. Don't forget the corners. When it's done, it will be an even grid about 1/2" square covering the pan bottom. Good luck and don't worry, 10-12 layers and you'll be able to sign your name with it. The pepper will vary as to individual taste. One note though, pepper almost doubles its intensity as it soaks and it is easy to overpower the finished product. I would recommend that a light dusting would be sufficient for most people (about the way you would pepper a baked potato). Red pepper flakes, even more so. Again, hold the pepper can about a foot above, and dust it evenly--good, you remembered the corners.

Layer the meat strips across the bottom of the pan one at a time. Starting on one side, place the strips next to each other without overlapping and with all of the strips running in the same direction. Work the meat across until the layer is complete, without voids. Pat the surface, edges and corners down smooth and flat. Salt, molasses and pepper the surface as was done to the bottom of the pan to start. The second layer of meat is done the same, but it is run perpendicular to the first layer. Pat smooth, salt, molasses and pepper. Run each additional layer perpendicular to the layer before it. Continue layering the meat until it reaches to a level about 2" from the top of the pan. The last layer, or partial layer, gets the salt, molasses and pepper treatment as well.

This brining method will cure the meat in two days. Place the pan(s) in the refrigerator, cover and let sit undisturbed for the first day (refrigeration is not necessary if prepared in a cool climate 35-45F). After about 24 hours the meat should be 'turned'. Dig your hands in the pan and separate all of the strips, turning it over several times to get the meat redistributed into a random order. Mash the meat back down into the brining juices (at this point the juice will be thin and watery), cover, and let sit for another day. I usually taste the juice at this point--if it tastes too salty the meat can be rinsed with water, but it will not be as good. If the salt is right it will have a slightly sweet, peppery flavor. During this next day the meat will soak up the brine juices and when the meat is removed before smoking, it will have a 'candied' texture--sticky and pliable. There should be very little, if any, brine solution left in the pan. The meat will have soaked up the brine and be somewhat swelled up, as compared to the first turning.

Smokehousing the meat: The smoking process will require a smokehouse or smoking unit that is capable of maintaining 80-90F. If there is a small volume, piping the smoke from an external source will provide a cooler smoke, and a hot plate or a few briquettes/lump charcoal could provide the heat source. In a medium size unit (refrigerator size), a cast iron frying pan with chips set on a hot plate will work--although it may be difficult to maintain a constant temperature. The more volume, the easier it is to control the temperature. I would recommend that a fire be built and maintained throughout the smoking process, which will take from 48 to 70 hours--depending upon the thickness of the meat.

The smokehouse that I use is medium-large (350) cu.ft. unit. It will maintain a good smoky 80-100F with 2-3 half gallon milk-jug-sized pieces of wood burning. Use seasoned, barkless wood of your choice. I use red alder, apple, plum, cherry, oak, pear and some of the best I've ever done was with some 75 year old grape stumps. Citrus works good too. Get the smokehouse going and rack or hang the meat while the temperature stabilizes. If you rack the meat, place it *without* the pieces touching each other--just enough room to run a finger between the strips. Stainless 3/16" rod sharpened on both ends works good for hanging--again, leave some space between the strips.

As you place the strips, run them through your thumb and index finger to squeegee off any excess brine. Before placing the racks or skewers into the smokehouse, coarse black pepper or additional red pepper

flakes may be added for those who like lotsa zip. Load the smokehouse and leave the door cracked open for the first couple hours, or until the surface of the meat has dried to the touch. Close the doors, poke the fire and keep an eye on the temperature for a couple of days. Don't worry about the meat spoiling if the fire goes out. The meat is cured. It's said that the old timers used to make their jerky while they traveled. When they made camp at night they would hang the jerky over the campfire until dawn, when they broke camp they simply packed up the jerky and continued smoking the next night. This process takes about 4-5 days and is worth every minute. Probably the two most important items would be too much salt and too much heat. If you decide to try this method, I garr-own-tee you'll never find another piece of store bought jerky that even comes close.

 [I would like to try Dan's jerky but I don't have a smokehouse and I don't think that my NBBD will do the trick. Can you make Dan's Smokehouse Jerky in a regular barbecue pit?]

Dave Crawford--

I made some of Dan's jerky a few months ago in my Hondo. No real problem keeping the temperature down. I just burned 1 or 2 lumps of mesquite at a time and kept putting small lumps of flavor wood on top of the coals. I smoked it in the Hondo for about 32 hours, then moved it inside to the oven (set to low) to finish drying it. The jerky in the hotter end of the smoker dried and finished a bit before that in the other end. All was excellent.

10.2.3. Steaks

 [Can you tell me how to smoke a whole ribeye or prime rib?]

Danny Gauden--

I bought a case of whole ribeyes for Q-Fest '97 through one of my suppliers, but you can buy just one at almost any butcher shop. They average about 10 to 12 lbs. I like to rub them down (any good rub will work) the night before, and let them sit overnight in the refrigerator. Next morning, smoke over an indirect fire at about 225-230F. Take them off at desired doneness. I smoked ours to 160F internal temperature which is medium done, for I had to try and please a large crowd. Some wanted them rare, some well. This seemed to be a happy medium for doneness. As one said, a guy that likes a steak pink will usually eat one more done, but one that likes a steak well-done will hardly ever eat a rare one.

I personally like my steaks nice and pink, which would be around 150F internal temperature on an accurate thermometer. Rare will be at 140F, and 160F is "just done" with no pink, but not at all dry. Make sure you stick the thermometer in the center of the meat, and in deep enough for a good accurate reading.

It takes about 5 to 7 hours to smoke a whole ribeye, depending on doneness. Keep the smoke on it fairly heavy, for this is a thick cut of meat and smoke penetration only goes so far in a short cooking time such as this.

10.2.4. Short Ribs

 [How about a recipe for smoking short ribs?]

Carey W. Starzinger--

Title: Smoked Short Ribs

Amount Measure Ingredient -- Preparation Method

Amount	Measure	Ingredient	Preparation Method
4	pounds	Beef plate short ribs	
10	1/2 ounce	Condensed tomato soup	
3/4	cup	Dry red wine	
1/4	cup	Finely chopped onion	
2	tablespoon	Cooking oil	
1	tablespoon	Prepared mustard	
2	teaspoon	Chili powder	
1	teaspoon	Paprika	
1/2	teaspoon	Celery seed	

Soak wood chips (Mesquite or Hickory) in enough water to cover starting about an hour before cooking time. Drain the chips. In covered grill, place SLOW coals on both sides of a drip pan. Sprinkle coals with some dampened wood chips. Place ribs bone side down on grill. Replace cover. Cook ribs until done, about 1 1/2-2 hours, adding more wood chips every half hour.

Meanwhile, in saucepan, mix tomato soup, wine, onion, cooking oil, mustard, chili powder, paprika, celery seed and 1/4 tsp. salt. Heat sauce at side of grill. Brush ribs with sauce. Grill, uncovered, about 20 minutes more; brush ribs frequently with sauce.

10.2.5. Roasts

 [I have a seven pound chuck roast. Can I BBQ it?]

Dave Crawford--

A little while ago I got some chuck roasts on sale at Albertson's for \$.99/lb. I chose what I thought were the best 3 roasts in the case when I was there--each about 7 lbs, 3 inches thick, and fairly well marbled.

I took one out of the freezer the day before early in the morning and let it thaw on the counter for a couple hours, just enough so the frost was gone off the top but the bottom was still hard as a rock. I moved the meat into a 2 gallon Ziploc bag, added most of a can of Dr. Pepper, most of a can of beer, and several healthy shakes of Tapatío hot sauce (my favorite all-round sauce, hotter than Tabasco with less vinegar, and cheap.) I let it marinate on the counter until mostly thawed, then moved it to the refrigerator overnight, turned it once in a while until I went to bed.

Fired up the Hondo about 7:30 am with most of a chimney of mesquite lump charcoal. Took the meat out of the fridge as soon as the fire was lit. Dumped the chimney of charcoal into the firebox when it was hot and added a split log of ash-wood. Once it was burning I closed the firebox, made sure the dampers were open, waited for the grill temperature to come up to about 200F, and put on the meat. These roasts have plenty of fat through them, but no fat cap like a brisket or a butt so I put a layer of thick bacon on top.

About 4:30 p.m. the meat was about 150F internal temperature. Sure takes a long time to get the meat up to 160F. I moved the roast into a Dutch oven in the kitchen with the oven set to a little over 250F for the

last hour and a half. Took the meat out of the oven 5:45 p.m. and let it rest in the Dutch oven until 6:10. Then I cut it off the bone to serve. I've cooked plenty of beef on my smoker, always with mixed reviews. This is the first time I've used the Dutch Oven. My wife raved about this one. She rated it as one of my top 3 Q's ever.

=====

Wayne Scholtes--

Just did a boneless rump roast yesterday after putting Bear's rub on it Saturday. It took 7 1/2 hours at a door thermometer reading of 215F to reach an internal temperature of 150F. The smoke boxes were filled with dry hickory chips surrounding one onion per box. Boy, did that smoke smell good! The meat was so good--nice smoke flavor, tender, and juicy. I'd say Bear is onto something with that rub. I do think that I'll take the next roast out when it hits 145F, because I like it a bit less done than what it ended up this time. (I still ate half of it after that first warm slice.) I will definitely stock up on these the next time they're on sale.

=====

Danny Gaulden--

Here's another kind of beef that is barbecued at some joints--"shoulder clods". They are cut a little ways down from the shoulder (more on the leg), and weight about 20-25 pounds. Kind of looks like a goose neck bottom round, but are fatter. They need to be barbecued slow and easy, and can be quite tasty. This cut of meat is for a larger crowd. On larger roasts you need to cut them up into sections so the smoke can penetrate.

=====

Belly--

My Boy, come sit at your ol' father's knee and let me tell a tale or two about barbecuing a chuck roast. First you may want to do a dry rub on it and maybe let him sit for up to 24 hours in the fridge. Then make your fire and let it burn down good, as you want to cook slow and long. If the roast is extra lean, you may want to lard it, or put a few slices of bacon on top of it for a while. Make you a good mop sauce and keep the roast wet. Cook him about an hour per pound, mopping about each 1/2 hour. Watch it, mop it and wait--it be well worth the time and work. When it's done, chop it up and put it in a Dutch oven and put a good BBQ sauce over it and heat slowly and call me. I be right there.

Here's a good Texas rub:

Take about a tablespoon each of: salt, black pepper, red pepper, garlic power, onion power, sugar and paprika. Mix ingredients and rub into meat well and let the meat sit until it is dry.

Put the meat into your pit at 220F. Mop after it has cooked for about two hours and then every 1/2 hour. Here's a good mop: into a sauce pan add 1/2 cup of your dry rub, then add 1 cup each of beer and Dr. Pepper. Heat to a low boil and add 1/2 cup cider vinegar (4 %), 1/2 cup vegetable oil, a sliced up lemon, a big cut up onion, 3 or 4 minced cloves of Garlic, a shot or two of Louisiana hot sauce, 1 tablespoon of Worcestershire sauce. Add water to make a total of about four cups and keep warm.

Give that roast the fork test for tenderness--it should go in easy. Takes 4-5 hours. Please don't use a vinegar finishing sauce, try this:

Belly's Chuck Roast Finishing Sauce

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
5	ounce	Worcestershire sauce
2	cups	Dr. pepper
1	dash	Tabasco sauce
1/4	cup	brown sugar

2/3 cup good salad oil
 salt to taste
 3 teaspoon garlic powder
 6 ounce can tomato paste
 1/2 cup lemon juice

Mix all together and let it sit all the time you're cooking the meat. Adjust sauce to your own taste--heat and salt.

 [I had some barbecued top round at a county fair and it had no smoke flavor. Why was this?]

Danny Gauden--

I never like to barbecue top round, for it is so thick, the smoke just can't penetrate it well. I do have a couple of churches that insist on this type of meat for they only have me smoke it, and they do their own slicing. That's why they like it--little fat to trim, easy to slice on a slicer. Anyway, I always cut the big rounds into 3 smaller pieces so that the smoke will get in there and do a better job, but it still doesn't start to compare to a good juicy brisket smoked right.

 [Does anybody know how to do Santa Maria style 'Tri-Tips'?]

Bill Wight--

Santa Maria Style Tri-Tip

A guy who owns a BBQ joint east of Los Angeles was grilling this meat as a demonstration at the California BBQ Championships and he told me how to do it.

Take a 2-3 lb. tri-tip roast and trim off the fat. Cut the meat into chunks the size of a small woman's fist and rub with a mixture of salt, black pepper and garlic powder, in a 40:40:20 ratio. Let the meat sit in the refrigerator, in a plastic bag, for at least 4 hours.

He grilled the meat over medium-hot mesquite coals. He was turning the chunks of meat constantly, moving them all around the grill. He pulled them off when the inside was medium-rare and the outside was well-done. Grilling time was about 20 minutes. This is a pretty tender piece of meat, so it doesn't need long cooking. He chopped the chunks into bite-sized pieces and served it covered with salsa fresca. Fresh salsa is a must--don't use the bottled stuff. Make your own or you can usually buy it in the deli section of most supermarkets, at least out West.

Bill's Salsa Fresca

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	pound	Ripe red tomatoes
1/2	pound	tomatillos or green tomatoes
3	large	sweet banana peppers, seeded
2	medium	Hungarian wax peppers, seeded
1/4	bunch	cilantro
1/2	medium	white or yellow onion
		Jalapeno or Serrano pepper, seeded
		adjust number for desired heat level
		juice of 1 lime
1	teaspoon	salt (to taste)

By hand or in a food processor or salsa maker, chop everything into 1/4 to 1/8-inch pieces. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and mix in lime juice and salt to taste.

10.3. Chicken

10.3.1. Breasts

[Can you tell me how to grill chicken breasts?]

David Westebbe (EskWIRED)--

I usually use (gasp) Kraft Barbecue Sauce on chicken breasts. It's got a good old-fashioned (as in "when I was a kid") taste.

This is how I do it:

Start the breasts with the skin side up--the coals are too hot at first to put the skin side down. Flip them over after about 15 minutes, and then again after another 15. If the skin is not yet crispy, cook them skin side down some more. You want good, crispy skin. Keep that fire low and don't allow it to flare up.

When you have good skin, brown and bubbly, paint it THINLY with BBQ sauce. Continue to cook it with the skin up until the sauce dries on. Then flip them over and paint the bottom thinly as well. Cook long enough so that the BBQ sauce burns a little bit, and gets nice and caramelized. This will form a nice surface to really slop the sauce onto, so that lots of it soaks into the burned stuff. Continue cooking (skin/sauce side up) until it dries; it should be thick and sweet and gooey. Paint some more on, so that the breasts are shiny; put them on a platter and serve.

This may sound complicated, but it's not. Just cook until the skin is crispy. Put on a thin coat of sauce, burn it, and then slop the sauce on. That's all there is to it. Your guests will rave.

 [Please give me a good method for smoking chicken breasts.]

Q'n--

Here is my recipe for smoking spicy chicken breasts.

Marinate 6 Chicken breasts in refrigerator 24 hours or longer.

Chicken Marinade

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
3/4	cup	your favorite BBQ sauce.
1/2	cup	Soy Sauce
		Jalapeno sauce (6 Jalapenos in 1/4 cup vinegar blended on liquefy)

Let the chicken marinate at least 4 hours.

Smoke at 200F for two hours (cooking time depends on your smoker and thickness of meat). After 2 hours transfer to grill and heat to 350F for 7 minutes turning the chicken at 3 1/2 minutes.

=====
 Bill Wight--

I take chicken breasts (bone in or boneless) and marinate them in Wishbone Italian salad dressing and let them sit in the refrigerator for at least 4 hours, better overnight. Put them in the smoker at 220-240F. Use mesquite, grape vines or apple wood for the smoke. The boneless breasts take about 45 minutes and with the bone, about 1 1/2-2 hours. You'll have to experiment a little as the thickness of the meat will make a big difference on the time required. This is so easy to do and the results are so good, you may never grill chicken again. Serve you favorite BBQ suace on the side.

Note: smoked chicken will be pink even when it is done. Go by internal temperature, not color. You can take them out at 160F.

10.3.2. Leg quarters

 [How about a method for smoking chicken leg quarters?]

Randy Dewberry--

Fired up the old SWOCS and did some chicken leg quarters. Used about 3 good hickory chunks in the flowerpot (used to contain the wood chunks that produces the smoke) and had smoke before I reached 175F. Marinated the chicken in Balsamic vinegar for 1 hour, then put some of the chicken rub on it from "Smoke and Spice". Smoked the quarters for 2 hours at 210F (next time I am going to try 250F for chicken). Then finished on my gas grill for 15 minutes (shooting for 10 min) just to finish the chicken, wet basting with my sauce. They were as nice a looking BBQ chicken as I have ever seen and these were skinless. Juicy-tender and oh so smoky.

Fellow SWOCer's, if you haven't tried your SWOCS as a short term smoker and then finish the meat off on the grill, try it. I promise you won't regret it. I used Rick's method of mixing 2 parts honey to 8 parts BBQ sauce for the final grilling. Make sure the honey is as light in color as possible for best flavor, like orange blossom honey. A stronger darker honey will overpower the chicken. Use any BBQ sauce of your choice. The honey gives it some real sticking power and makes a nice glaze.

(Editor--this technique will work with any smoker, water bullet, off-set firebox--not just a SWOCS.)

10.3.3. Whole chicken

 [How about some tips on doing whole chickens in my smoker?]

Danny Gaulden--

Some folks like to smoke them fast, and others slow. I've tried both methods over the years, and I prefer the slow method. I also like to do my chickens in halves, rather than whole. They take on a little more smoke, brown on both sides (which I think looks a lot nicer and they have a better flavor), plus you can apply a finishing sauce to both the outside and inside if you like.

Here's how I do chicken. Take your whole chicken and remove the giblets and neck from the body cavity. Wash the chicken off in cold water and then cut it in half through the breast bone, dividing the chicken into right and left halves. Pat the halves dry with a paper towel. I apply olive oil or a good cooking oil to both the outside and inside, season with salt, pepper, garlic powder, and lemon pepper. Sometimes I use a little thyme (be careful with this), or poultry seasoning. Place the chicken in a Ziploc-style bag, and let it sit for about 4 hours in the refrigerator. When you fire up the pit, bring chickens out of the refrigerator and let them sit at room temperature for as long as 30 minutes--no more. I'm kind of cautious about chicken and bacteria. I smoke my chickens at 225 to 250F and it usually takes about 3 1/2 to 4 hours. When I take my chickens off the pit using the 'shaking-hands' technique and I measure the internal temperature, it is always between 180-185F.

After an hour or so of smoking, brush the skin with a little oil, and again after about 2 hours. This helps keep the skin from drying out. Oh, make sure you smoke your chicken skin side up. If you wish to flip it over towards the end of the cooking time, fine.

I'm very relaxed barbecuing chicken, for an extremely constant temperature is not that critical. Why? Because chicken is not a tough piece of meat; it cooks in a fairly short period of time, so you don't have to worry so much about temperature spikes (for fear of burning the outside, and undercooking the inside) as one would with a brisket or pork butt. I find chicken is a fairly forgiving meat to barbecue.

When you can shake hands with the drumstick, and it moves freely all the way up into the thigh, it is done. Until you smoke a few and learn how to do this, I recommend that you use a thermometer to check for doneness, but always practice the shake-hands method at the same time. Using a thermometer can be difficult for beginners, for it will not read accurately if inserted next to a bone or cartilage. So be careful and make sure you insert it into the thigh; the last part of the chicken to cook. You can feel a bone if you hit one--no problem--just back off and try again. You'll figure it out after barbecuing a few. I think this is the reason so many people have trouble with chicken, and tend to undercook or overcook them. They just don't know how to tell when they are done. Once you figure this out, it's very easy to barbecue chicken, and your confidence will grow.

Chickens are cheap, fun to barbecue, and taste pretty darn good too! So practice, practice, practice. Have fun, and let me know how you are doing.

 [What is 'Up the butt' chicken?]

Editor--Summary of several posts--

It is a method for smoking whole chickens using a wire rack that goes in the butt cavity and holds the chicken upright during the smoking process. Some barbecuers also use a beer can, either empty or half full of water or beer in place of the wire rack. I saw whole chickens being barbecued with a 'beer can up the butt' at a BBQ competition where the barbecuers smoked the chicken in the horizontal position, breast

up. It was delicious. Smoking times will be 3-4 hours at 220-250F. Use Danny's 'shaking hands with the drumstick' method to determine when it's done--internal temperature of 180-185F.

10.4. Turkey

10.4.1. Breasts

[Can I successfully smoke a turkey breast in my pit?]

Danny Gauden--

Try this next time you do a turkey breast. Before you rub or season the breast, rub it all over with soft butter, shortening, etc. Then apply your favorite rub, and place it in the smoker. Two or three times while the turkey is smoking, brush on more butter. When the meat reaches 165F internal temperature, take it off, wrap it up, and that's it. Promise it will turn out right.

[Do your smoked turkey breasts have the skin on them?]

Danny Gauden--

No, they are skinless, boneless, turkey breasts. However, sometimes I get "skin on" boneless turkey breast, and they barbecue great also. I smoke them at about 220-230F, and take them off at 160F. After they start to cook a little, brush a little lard, or butter on them two or three times during the cooking process, and it will help give them that golden color. Caution, don't overcook them. They can dry out fast.

Editor--

Remember, smoked white turkey meat will take on a pink color from the smoke, so don't worry--if it's at temperature, it's done, even if it's pink.

10.4.2. Legs

Bill Wight--

While you're smoking something bigger, like a pork shoulder or a brisket at 220-240F, get a turkey leg or two and give them a dry poultry rub and throw them into the smoker off in a corner someplace. Take them out after about 3 hours and eat 'em for lunch--to go with that beer in your hand as you tend the pit. Makes the waiting and watching really worthwhile.

10.4.3. Whole turkey

[The few turkeys I have done (skin on) I have removed at 170F. Is 160F a "safe" temperature for a whole bird?]

Danny Gauden--

Sorry for not making myself clear. I NEVER take a skin-on, bone-in turkey out of the smoker at 160F internal temperature, just the skinless, boneless breasts. The breasts are done to perfection (in my opinion) at a temperature of 160F. They are still juicy, but not raw or soft. Remember, the white meat will cook a lot quicker and requires a lower temperature for doneness than the thigh and other dark meat pieces next to thick bone. When I first started smoking whole turkeys (skin on, bone in), I would stick a meat thermometer in the thigh (don't hit a bone, or the thermometer will not read correctly) and take the bird off at between 175-180F, depending on the turkey. (See below).

[Can you tell me how best to smoke a whole turkey?]

Danny Gauden--

Smoking turkeys can be one of the most challenging things to do for home barbecuers, for they are normally only cooked during the holiday season. Most folks on the list probably smoke a whole turkey only two or three times a year.

First, what do you look for in a good turkey? There are mainly two kinds for retail sale:

1) Free-range turkey, which can be a little harder to find, is a turkey that was raised on the ground, in a pen, and actually had the freedom of walking, exercising, etc. like you would think of turkeys raised on an old-fashioned farm. They can tend to be a little tougher because they get to exercise and use their muscles more, but many consider them more flavorful. If slow-smoked properly, their meats can be turned into a tender, delicious morsel.

2) The most common brand of turkeys found in stores today are your name-brand, mass-produced birds. They are not free-range birds. Butterball and Honeysuckle are a couple of the most popular brands. This is the kind most people smoke for the holidays and can be quite delicious also.

To defrost a turkey properly, it should be done in the refrigerator. Depending on the size of the bird and temperature of your refrigerator, it could take anywhere between three to five days to thaw. After it is thawed, the bird will keep several days in the refrigerator before spoiling.

OK, we are going to discuss the foundations of good, basic, slow-smoking here. Some people brine their turkeys, inject their turkeys, and rub seasonings under the skin. I'm not going to deal with that. After you learn the basics of good slow-smoking, you can experiment with variations.

Early in the morning of the big "turkey" day, take the thawed turkey out of wrapper, remove neck, gizzard, and liver from cavity of turkey and set aside. You would be surprised how many barbecuers have forgotten and left this inside the bird! Wash the bird thoroughly with cold water and pat dry. Remove

plastic pop-up thermometer if installed as they don't work. Never trust a pop-up thermometer when smoking a turkey. It will "pop-up" before the bird is done, and get you into trouble.

I like to rub turkey all over with a good olive oil, or liquid vegetable oil. Then, I like to use a good rub which I hand-rub all over the turkey. I prefer to use white pepper vs. black in my turkey rub for black pepper on fowl can appear to look dirty when bird is smoked. Next, fire up the smoker, and when internal temperature in the pit is around 225F place bird on the pit, breast-side up.

I aim for a cooking temperature range of 225-240F during the entire smoking process. Every hour or two, take a basting brush and reapply some oil. This helps to keep the skin from becoming dry and tough, plus promotes a nice golden color.

The most difficult part for people who don't smoke a lot of turkeys, is knowing when they are done. For me, this is easy for I have done thousands. On the average, a 12-15 pound bird takes about 6 hours, a 16-20 pound bird can take up to 8 hours. There are no set number of hours per pound for turkeys, for they are not like all other whole meats. Some are just more tender than others even before they are cooked. Here's how I know when my birds are done. I never use a thermometer. I simply "shake-hands" with the drum stick. When it shakes easily and is loose all the way into the thigh-joint, I know it's done. I can also feel the thigh with my hands and can tell when the bird is ready to take off. It will be very soft and tender. I realize this is very challenging for most of you, but once you learn this technique, it is a sure-fire way of knowing when your bird is done. Knowing that this will take practice, I recommend you use a thermometer until you have mastered this technique.

During last year's turkey smoking season, I purposely used a thermometer a few times to give the guys on the list an idea of what temperature I was taking my birds off using my "shake-hands" method. With the thermometer applied deep into the thigh, it was generally reading about 180F. Caution must be taken when using a thermometer. You CANNOT hit a bone or gristle with the tip of thermometer for it will not give you a true reading. Don't use a thick-stemmed meat thermometer that you find in most grocery stores. I used a long, skinny-stemmed thermometer that reads from 0-220F (Editor--like the probe on a Polder or Sunbeam digital thermometer). This type of thermometer is much easier to use when trying to probe a turkey, plus some can be calibrated. After the bird is done, remove it from smoker, let cool a bit, slice and enjoy.

10.5. Pheasant

[I was given two pheasants. Can I smoke them?]

Larry Willrath--

I smoke pheasant all the time. It is a real treat. I rub the pheasants well with peanut oil then salt and pepper.

I smoke at 180F and reapply the peanut oil 2 times during smoking. Cook to internal temperature of 165F.

10.6. Lamb

[Can you give us some pointers on smoking lamb?]

Jeffrey Cohen--

I picked up a small (3 lb.) boneless lamb shoulder roast recently. It was rolled in a kind of net. I rubbed it with salt, pepper, garlic powder and oregano and put it in my Cookshack smoker (an electric Lazy-Q smoker). I used oak and some hickory pellets for smoke. I gave it 5 hours at 180-190F. The 5 hours smoking time related more to how much time I had than anything scientific, but I thought that would be a

good guess. The internal temperature was 143F when I took it out. It was pink, tender and delicious, and that's how we like 'em.

I made a thin sauce out of roughly equal parts rice vinegar, Dijon mustard and mirin (sweet cooking sake). It occurred to me later that this would make a good last second glaze in the style of Danny Gaulden's mustard glaze for ribs (see Danny's rib post). The sauce was pretty tasty, but next time I'll try it with raspberry vinegar instead of rice vinegar. And maybe honey might be better than mirin. Heck, I could change the mustard to horseradish and no one would ever recognize me.

=====

Glenn the BBQCHEF--

In a recent BBQ competition, I used a rack of lamb and had the butcher take off the fat lip and had him remove the back bone. I dry rubbed it with black pepper, garlic, onion, tarragon, basil and sugar. I put it on the grill for about 5 min on each side to give it an even brown then moved it off the direct heat, closed the lid and at about 350F smoked it for 20 min. Took it off 10 min before judging and then sliced it between the bones. The middle of the eye, about the size of a quarter, was rare, not dripping rare, but cooked rare. I cooked two of these and gave one batch to the judges and sampled one for myself. I knew there was no way I could lose. It was so tender and tasty. I saw most of my competition dipping their lamb in tomato sauce. You can't do that to lamb; you have to be a purist with lamb.

10.7. Venison

 [How about a barbecued venison recipe?]

Jim Moore--

I've only been smoking venison roasts for about two seasons now so I'm no expert at it, but here's a few things I've learned or observed.

Most important - Don't overcook the meat or it will be as dry and chewy as a poorly cooked brisket.

When I didn't use a rub the meat tended to get a hard and crispy exterior that I didn't care for all that much. It also would stop the smoke penetration into the meat. The rub kept the outer part pliable and yielded, IMHO, a much better product. So don't overcook the meat.

Smoked Venison Roast

Southern Dry Rub

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1/4 cup		ground black pepper
1/4 cup		paprika
1/4 cup		corn sugar (get at beer supply store)
2	tablespoons	salt
2	teaspoons	dry mustard
1	teaspoons	cayenne pepper, ground

Defrost the roast if frozen. Sprinkle on rub. Rewrap and put in refrigerator for several hours (preferably overnight). When ready to smoke, take out of refrigerator, sprinkle on more rub, and let it sit for an hour.

Get smoker ready and up to 200F. Smoke (I use hickory or mesquite) for about 1 hour to 1.5 hours per pound. Take off, let rest for fifteen minutes, slice, and eat up. Best venison roast I ever had.

=====

Pat Lehnherr--

Here's a rub recipe I posted some time ago for venison. When I created this recipe, I wanted a rub that would complement the smoke but not hide the venison flavor, so it's fairly mild as rubs go. I used cherry wood to smoke it and highly recommend it if you can get it. If you don't have access to that, I would guess that oak or pecan would be good. I wouldn't use mesquite as I think the smoke flavor from that would overpower the venison flavor.

Venison roast is extremely lean for barbecuing, but it can be done. I'd go with a higher than normal temperature, maybe 300F or so. Unless you got an old mossy horn, it's already tender enough and you don't want to dry it out. I don't recall the time it took, so watch it closely. If I had to guess, I'd say 3 to 4 hours, depending on the size, but that's only a guess.

Pat's Venison Rub

Recipe By: Pat Lehnherr

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
--------	---------	----------------------------------

1	tablespoon	rosemary
2	teaspoons	sumac berries -- ground
1	teaspoon	dried orange peel
2	teaspoons	tarragon
2	teaspoons	basil

This turned out great but wasn't quite right. The sumac berries were awesome! They have a tart but mild flavor. I found out about these while perusing a Penzey's catalog (414) 574-0277. Bought them out of curiosity and use them regularly now. The rub does need another flavor, though I think I could get rid of the basil. Next time I'll try a little coriander or thyme and some white pepper. I also plan on creating a version of this rub for chicken.

10.8. Fish

[How about some tips on hot smoking fish on my smoker?]

Dave Frary--

Fish should be soaked in a salt water brine for a few hours before smoking. It prevents the meat from getting mushy during the cooking. Cooking times are relatively short with fish.

This recipe will work with Mackerel, Bluefish, Salmon, and even Cod.

If you catch the fish yourself, cut through their throat to bleed them while they're still alive. Put them head down in a bucket so they'll pump out as much blood as possible. Wash and chill the whole fish until you can fillet them. Early in the morning of the day you're going to smoke, wash 4 to 6 fillets and place them in a brine made from:

Brine For Fish Smoking

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
--------	---------	----------------------------------

1	quart	cold water
	1/3 cup	Kosher salt
	1/4 cup	sugar
1	teaspoon	black, red or other peppers to taste

Mix this together in a glass or enamel bowl; add the fish and submerge the fillets with a weight to hold them under the brine. Brine the fillets in the refrigerator from 2 to 4 hours (longer makes the fish saltier).

Remove the fillets and wipe dry with paper towels. Place them, skin side down, on several thicknesses of dry paper towels and let them air dry for several hours. The surface is dry enough when your finger sticks to the flesh.

Hot smoke over a 250F wood fire for about 2 hours or until the fillets are firm to the touch (like medium rare steak).

Peel off the skin and serve.

=====

Here's a great grilled fish recipe:

Grilled Fish

Amount Measure Ingredient -- Preparation Method

1	small	Onion, chopped
1	tablespoon	Brown sugar
1/4	cup	Cider vinegar
2	tablespoons	Catsup
2	tablespoons	Dry mustard
1	teaspoon	Worcestershire sauce
1/4	teaspoon	Ground cloves
1	teaspoon	Chili powder
1/4	teaspoon	Cayenne pepper
1 1/2	pounds	Firm whitefish fillets such as Red Snapper or Halibut

Combine all sauce ingredients in a pot, place over medium heat and boil until reduced to a thin syrup. Pour the syrup through a strainer, discard the onion in the strainer and chill the syrup. Place fish steaks or fillets in a baking dish and spoon some syrup over them. Marinate in the refrigerator for 1 hour. Cook the fish on a hot grill, basting with a teaspoon of barbecue syrup on each side.

[Anyone got recipes for grilling and smoking salmon?]

Dave Frary--
Smoked Salmon Marinade from Backwoods Frank

Salmon Marinade No. 1 - (Enough brine for two large Salmon fillets)

Amount Measure Ingredient -- Preparation Method

1/2	gallon	HOT water
1/2	cup	Kosher salt
1-1/2	cup	brown sugar
3	tablespoons	garlic powder
3	tablespoons	coarse ground black pepper
1/2	cup	soy sauce
1	tablespoon	bay leaves, crushed

Add ingredients to hot water and stir until dissolved. Allow brine to cool. Add salmon fillets, soak covered for 3 hours in refrigerator. Remove fillets and air dry for at least 1 hour. Smoke in a single layer for about 2 hours at 250F or until firm and golden.

=====

Salmon Marinade No. 2 - (Enough brine for two large Salmon fillets.)

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
3	cups	water
1	cup	soy sauce
1/3	cup	brown sugar
1/3	cup	white sugar
1/3	cup	Kosher salt
1/2	teaspoon	onion powder
1/2	teaspoon	garlic powder
1/2	teaspoon	pepper

Stir until ingredients are dissolved. Marinate fillets overnight. Air dry fillets and smoke as usual.

=====

Smoke-Grilled Salmon

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	teaspoon	Grated lime rind
1/4	cup	Lime juice
1	tablespoon	Vegetable oil
1	teaspoon	Dijon mustard
1	pinch	Pepper
4		Salmon steaks -- 1-inch thick
1/3	cup	Toasted sesame seed (opt.)

In shallow dish, combine lime rind and juice, oil, mustard and pepper; add fish, turning to coat. Cover and marinate at room temperature for 30 minutes, turning occasionally.

Reserving marinade, remove fish; sprinkle with sesame seed. Place on greased grill directly over medium heat. Add soaked wood chips. Cover and cook, turning and basting with marinade halfway through, for 16-20 minutes or until fish flakes easily when tested with fork.

=====

Bear's Smoked Salmon

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	cup	brown sugar
1	cup	salt
1/4	cup	lemon pepper
1	large	whole salmon, cut into steaks

Mix all the dry items for rub.

Lay out a piece of plastic wrap long enough to wrap both filets well. Lay a filet scales down 5 inches up from the bottom of the wrap (lengthwise so the ends are left open). Pack all the "rub" on top of the filet. Lay the other side face down into the "rubbed" fish. You should now have the semblance of a sugar stuffed fishy.

Flip the bottom of the wrap up over the top of the fish and wrap it tightly (leaving the ends open).

Put on a cookie rack (or some such) in a baking dish and in the refrigerator. Let sit for 24 hours. Brown water will roll out of the ends that you left open.

Remove from wrap and scrape off excess rub. Let stand and air dry for 3 hours.

Smoke at 160F for 2-4 hours (when it starts to flake apart with a fork, it's done). I like to use cherry wood this.

=====

Bob's Grilled Salmon

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
4		4-6 oz. salmon steaks
3	tablespoons	Melted butter
1	tablespoon	Lemon juice
1	tablespoon	White wine vinegar
1/4	teaspoon	Grated lemon peel
1/4	teaspoon	Garlic salt
1/4	teaspoon	Salt
1	dash	Hot pepper sauce -- (optional)

Combine the sauce ingredients stirring thoroughly. Generously brush both sides of the salmon steaks with mixture.

Grill on a well-oiled grill over hot coals. Make a tent of foil or use barbecue cover and place over salmon. Grill 6-8 minutes per side depending on the thickness of your steaks. Baste frequently. Turn once, brushing with sauce. Steaks should flake easily when tested with a fork.

=====

Grilled Cedar Plank Salmon

Recipe By: Ryan Hamilton

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
2		salmon fillets
2		thin untreated cedar planks
	lots	ginger -- chopped
2	tablespoons	lime or lemon zest -- chopped fine
2	tablespoons	orange zest -- chopped fine
		salt and pepper
		Cajun or Creole spice mix
		olive oil

I tried this recipe last weekend, and it was amazing. This is a variant of a signature dish of Emeril Lagasse (of the TVFN fame). The original recipe used horseradish and trout instead of ginger and salmon.

I had a hard time finding thin cedar planks (shingles) sold singly in the local hardware store, they seemed to only sell them in bunches of 40. I did however find untreated cedar shims that I was able to make do with.

So anyway, here's what you do. Preheat your grill and oil up one side of the cedar with your olive oil. Sprinkle a bit of the Cajun seasoning on the plank, and lay the filet of salmon on top. Season the filet with salt, pepper, and the spice mix. Cover the filet completely with the ginger and zest -- this adds flavor and helps the fish retain all of its moisture. Put the whole thing directly on the grill over the coals (cedar plank side down), close the lid, and stand back! The thing will smoke like crazy for a while. Check on the salmon after 15 minutes. If the plank catches on fire before the salmon is done, simply spray it with some water (I had to do this a couple times).

When the salmon is done, you can either serve the whole thing with the cedar flaming around the edges, or remove it from the cedar plank and serve. You may wish to remove most of the crushed ginger topping as it is a bit overpowering.

A nice sauce to accompany this can be made with soy sauce, green onions, and sesame oil. I don't know the measurements, I just winged it.

[I have heard a rumor that smoking fish leaves an odor in the smoker that remains long after the fish has been devoured. I was wondering if there is any truth to this?]

Charles Hersey--

We heard this claim on the List--that fish might foul a smoker. As I recall, it wasn't a valid claim for the most part. I have an electric smoker that is unaffected by smoking fish.

11. Freezing barbecue meat and leftovers

[What is the best method to reheat my barbecue?]

Jay Bennett--

I used to eat my leftover BBQ cold because I felt reheating it changed the texture and turned into ordinary pot roast. Lately, I've been trying out a novel method I learned from a Q'er and caterer in Houston. Oil a brown paper bag, put the meat inside, staple the bag shut. Put a rack in a deep baking pan (like a 13X9 cake pan), add hot or boiling water below the level of the rack, place the bag on the rack and place the pan in a hot oven. This warms the meat up without drying it out or overheating it (so it doesn't toughen up). Be sure the bag doesn't touch the oven heating elements! Try an oven temperature of about 325F. It takes about 20 minutes or so, you will have to experiment, but I think the water regulates the temperature and makes timing less critical.

[I have some smoked whole chickens in the freezer. How do I reheat them?]

Ed Pawlowski--

Defrost them in the microwave. You can then heat them in there also. Do it on a low heat setting and they will be as juicy and tasty as the day they were taken off the smoker.

[I have some leftover barbecue. What's the best way to freeze it?]

Ed Pawlowski--

I freeze chickens whole, brisket I'll cut into about thirds, pulled pork I put in dinner-sized packages, same with country ribs, about 6 to a package. Use freezer-type Ziploc bags. Editor--For longer-term freezing, wrap the pieces of barbecue in aluminum foil before putting them into the Ziploc bags.

Sometimes we'll pull it out the day before and put it in the refrigerator to thaw, but it is a quick dinner when you have been out and do not have time to cook. That is the beauty of the microwave. Depending on the size, put it in the defrost cycle for about 10 minutes. If you can, break it down and do it in five minute intervals to be sure it is defrosting and not cooking away on the outside.

Once defrosted, I heat it on medium for about two minutes. Check to see if it needs a minute or two more, letting it stand for about half the defrosting time. Sounds longer than it really takes, and heated gently, it will be a juicy as it was the day you froze it.

[I smoked a big brisket yesterday and we ate only half of it. What can I do with the rest?]

Summary of several posts--
You can chop some of it up for barbecue sandwiches, give a chunk of it to a good neighbor, slice some and eat it hot or cold or in sandwiches for the next several days, chop some up and use it in tacos or burritos, but probably the best way to use left-over brisket is to chop it up and use it in chili.

[Can you freeze fresh briskets and still get good barbecue? In other words, should I stock up when I see them on sale?]

Pat Lehnherr--
The one I did last weekend was two years old. I kept it in the deep freeze at about 5 to 10F. It turned out to be one of my best briskets ever.

Belly--
I have kept fresh uncooked brisket frozen for as long as six months and I cannot tell which is which. I always keep three or four on hand.

David Gerard--
No degradation for fresh briskets for up to six-eight months if sealed from air to prevent freezer burn (dehydration). (Keep them in their cry-o-vac pack.)

 [Is it dangerous to your health to eat barbecue due to the presence of carcinogens in the meat caused by the wood fire?]

Smoky Hale-

Found this on the Kansas City BBQ Forum and it seems to answer your question.

Nitrosamines, which may be produced in charred fat of certain animals, has tentatively and tenuously been linked to cancer in humans. In order for nitrosamines to be created, there must be very high temperatures (500F+) and charring. Minute quantities may, therefore, be created by careless trimming of the fat on steaks to be broiled (500-700F) and overcooked or flamed. The risk of getting cancer from this is less than drowning in the shower, IMHO.

Barbecuing is, by definition, cooked at temperatures around the boiling point of water and no competent barbecuer is likely to willingly let his meat reach the point of charring. The 'burnt ends' served by some commercial establishments are not barbecued and are more of an affront to good taste than a threat to health.

If cooking meat over hot coals were a hazard to human health, the species would have starved or died out a couple million years ago.

I think this is a rumor started by a vegetarian who used to be a Women's Magazine Food Editor and therefore knew nothing about barbecue.

Cook slow, relax, have fun, and don't worry.

12. What goes well with BBQ?

12.1. Coleslaw

 [I hear that coleslaw is a favorite side dish with BBQ. Got any good recipes?]

Kit Anderson--

This is the recipe for coleslaw from Corky's in Memphis. This is the best slaw I've tasted. Many ingredients are the same in other slaws- the difference must be the celery seeds, vinegar, and mustard. Don't leave anything out. It is perfect.

Corky's Coleslaw

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	medium	head of green cabbage -- shredded
2	medium	carrots -- grated
1		green pepper -- finely diced
2	tablespoons	onion -- grated
2	cups	mayonnaise
3/4	cup	sugar
1/4	cup	Dijon mustard
1/4	cup	cider vinegar
2	tablespoons	celery seeds
1	teaspoon	salt
1/8	teaspoon	white pepper

Mix vegetables in a bowl. Mix remaining ingredients in another. Mix together and toss well. Cover and refrigerate 3-4 hours.

=====

Kit Anderson--

Here's another slaw recipe that is really good. No sugar. Hardly any mayonnaise.

Kit's Coleslaw

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
2	ounce	peanut oil
1/2	ounce	lime juice
1/2	ounce	cider vinegar
1/2	teaspoon	mustard
1/4	teaspoon	celery salt
1	ounce	mayonnaise
		salt and pepper
	dash	paprika
1	head	cabbage, shredded
1	small	onion, minced
2	each	jalapenos, (or more) minced

Mix first 8 ingredients and whisk. Pour over remaining ingredients. Better if made 12 hours ahead.

=====

Jack's Coleslaw (Grillin' and Chillin' TV-FOOD Network)

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1/2	small	head green cabbage, shredded
1	each	red bell pepper, julienned
1	each	yellow bell pepper, julienned
2	tablespoons	fresh dill
1	tablespoon	dill seed
1/2	tablespoon	chipotle powder
1/2	cup	mayonnaise (good quality)
		salt and freshly ground pepper

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and toss well. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Chill until ready to serve.

12.2. Beans

[Somebody told me about smoking beans. How do I do that?]

Danny Gauden--

Editor--(These be 'Danny's Beans')

Drain 2 cans of B&M, or Bush's "baked beans" (Campbell's pork & beans will work in a pinch). Drain 75% or more of liquid from beans and discard (the liquid, not the beans). Pour beans into baking dish (no lid required). In a skillet, fry 4 thick slices of HICKORY smoked bacon well done, pat dry, and place in

freezer so that it becomes brittle while preparing other ingredients. Now fry 4 more slices of bacon until medium done, and set aside.

Drain all but 2 or 3 tablespoons of bacon grease out of skillet and save for other recipes. Sauté 1 small onion, 1 small green, and 1 small red (if available) bell pepper for 3 or 4 minutes in hot bacon grease. Pour sautéed onions, peppers, and bacon grease into beans. In a cup, mix 2 tablespoons of yellow mustard, 4 or 5 tablespoons of your favorite BBQ sauce, 3 tablespoons of dark brown sugar, or 5 tablespoons of molasses, and pour into beans. Crumble or dice the cold bacon with a good chef's knife, and stir into beans. Place medium-done bacon slices on top of the beans and bake in oven at 350F for about 45 minutes, or in your pit until thick and rich. Hope you guys like this as well as we do.

=====

Red's Prize Winnin' Pintos

Ingredients:

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
6	canned	Jalapeno peppers -- or suit yourself
1/2	teaspoon	cayenne pepper
1	teaspoon	black pepper
1	tablespoon	chili powder
2	pounds	pinto beans -- dry
1/2	pound	salt pork -- cubed 1x1x1/4"
2	medium	onions -- chopped
2	cloves	garlic -- minced

Soak the beans overnight. Drain, place in a pot, and refill with water to cover the beans and add everything else. Cook very slowly for 4 to 6 hours.

When the beans are done, test for salt and adjust to your preference. Don't salt in advance, because the salt pork will do that for you.

=====

Bill Wight--
Easy-Smoked Beans

Take three cans of your favorite beans: pinto, ranch, black, pork-and-bean, (or mix them) and put them into a sauce pan on the stove. Include all the liquid from the beans. Add 1/2 cup of your favorite tomato-based BBQ sauce and 1/4 cup brown sugar, honey or molasses. Heat the beans to a boil and transfer them to a big dish that has lots of surface area. A Corningware dish works well for this. Put the dish in your smoker, uncovered, for 3-4 hours to absorb the smoke. Stir every 30 minutes or so to bring beans to the surface. Simple and one of the best side dishes you can make. Don't forget the Beano!

12.3. Chili

 [Does chili taste better when made with smoked meat?]

Ken Haycook--
 The best chili is made with slow-smoked brisket.

Ken Haycook's Award Winning Chili - aka Garden Fresh Chili

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
3	pounds	Smoked Beef Brisket, diced
2	cloves	Garlic, minced
1	teaspoon	Black pepper
2	tablespoons	Cumin
1	teaspoon	Ginger
1	tablespoon	Red Pepper
1	small can	tomato paste
1 1/2	cup	Boiling water
1	medium	tomato
4	ounce can	V8 juice
3/4	cup	Onion, diced
1	tablespoon	Salt
3	tablespoons	Chili Powder
1	tablespoon	Paprika
1	tablespoon	Dry Mustard
1	teaspoon	Oregano
1	large can	tomato sauce
1/2	can	cheap beer
1	each	Jalapeno

Only use Smoked Brisket. DO NOT USE GROUND BEEF.

Heat the brisket with a little oil. Drain and remove meat. Sauté onion and garlic in the left over oil. Add all the spices and let everything roast awhile in the pot. Add the beef back to the pot and add the tomato paste, tomato sauce, water, V8 juice, tomato, Jalapeno, and beer. Cover and simmer for 1 hr. Add more beer if chili gets too dry.

12.4. Corn

 [Any ideas on not-too-spicy side dishes besides beans, slaw and salad? Veggies, maybe?]

Danny Gaulden--
 Try this for a couple of great side dishes.

Corn in the husk: Soak corn in cool water for a few hours, then throw on grill--husk and all. Takes me about 45 to 50 minutes at about 350F to get it like I want it. Don't worry about the husk turning burnt-looking towards the end of the cooking time. That's normal. After done, take off husk, silk, rub in butter, and sprinkle on a little salt and pepper. Good stuff. BTW, the reason for soaking the corn in water is to create a natural steaming process as it cooks on the grill.

Whole Carrots: scrape and wash. Brush lightly with a little olive oil and grill for about 35 to 40 minutes at 350F. I put them on the grill at the same time the corn goes on. They are surprisingly delicious. Oh, don't forget to turn corn and carrots a time or two as they are grilling. I use a Weber Gas grill for these items.

Try to pick out some really good and naturally sweet corn and carrots. That plays a great role in how good the end results will be. If you are in doubt as to when the corn and carrots are done, don't panic. Just take 'em off the grill and check 'em. I keep a good sharp knife by my grill, and a plate. When I think the carrots are done, I just take one off, cut off a piece, and eat it. If not quite ready, it goes back on for a few more minutes. Couldn't be easier!

Grilled onions are great too, and easy to do. Slice about 1/2 inch thick, brush with a little oil (both sides), and grill till caramelized, turning once. If you try to turn them too many times they will start to break up. Try to get a good 1015-Vidalia variety of onion. The smell alone, while grilling, will drive you crazy.

Editor--

List members report on the success of grilling all kinds of vegetables: eggplant, zucchini, tomatoes, to name a few. Just brush the sliced veggies with a little olive oil and grill over hot coals (or gas) about 10 minutes on a side. Cut tomatoes in half and grill 10 minutes on a side also.

12.5. Potatoes

[How about a recipe for cooking potatoes on a grill?]

Robin Carr

Grilled Cajun Potato Wedges

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
3	large	russet potatoes (about 2 1/4 pounds)
1/4	cup	olive oil
2	cloves	garlic, minced
1	teaspoon	salt
1	teaspoon	paprika
1/2	teaspoon	dried thyme leaves, crushed
1/2	teaspoon	dried oregano leaves, crushed
1/4	teaspoon	black pepper
1/8	teaspoon	ground red pepper (up to 1/4)
2	cups	mesquite chips

1. Prepare barbecue grill for direct cooking. Preheat oven to 425F.
2. To prepare potatoes, scrub under running water with stiff vegetable brush; rinse. Dry well and do not peel.
3. Cut potatoes in half lengthwise with chef's knife; then cut each half lengthwise into 4 wedges.
4. Place potatoes in large bowl. Add oil and garlic; toss to coat well.
5. Combine salt, paprika, thyme, oregano, black pepper and ground red pepper in small bowl. Sprinkle over potatoes, toss to coat well.
6. Place potato wedges in single layer in shallow roasting pan. (Reserve remaining oil mixture left in large bowl.) Bake in oven for 20 minutes.
7. Meanwhile, cover mesquite chips with cold water; soak 20 minutes.
8. Drain mesquite chips; sprinkle over coals. Place potato wedges on their sides on grid. Grill potato wedges, on covered grill, over medium coals 15 to 20 minutes or until potatoes are browned and fork-tender, brushing with reserved oil mixture halfway through grilling time and turning once with tongs.

 [Got any real good potato salad recipes?]

Danny Gaulden--

Gaul Darn Delicious Tater Salad -- ala Rock

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
2	pounds	Potatoes, boiled, peeled, chopped to 1/2"
2		Hard boiled eggs. (one per pound)
1	teaspoon	Salt
1/8	teaspoon	Black pepper
2	tablespoons	Sweet relish
1/2	ounce	Yellow mustard
2	ounce	chopped Red peppers (I use chopped hot pickled cherry peppers)
1/2	cup	Celery, chopped
1/4	cup	Miracle Whip (+ or - depending on wetness of potatoes)
1/2	ounce	Red Onions, chopped -- optional

Add all ingredients to large bowl or tub, and mix by hand. Chill over night and serve.

12.6. Cornbread

 [Can someone give me a recipe for a good cornbread to serve with my barbecue?]

Earl Cadenhead--

Smoke Stack Jack's Manna From Heaven Crackling Corn Bread

Amount	Measure	Ingredient -- Preparation Method
1	cup	all-purpose flour
1	big pinch	salt
1/2	teaspoon	baking soda (heaping)
1	teaspoon	double acting baking powder
1 1/2	tablespoons	brown sugar or 1 tsp. white sugar
1	cup	plain yellow, blue, or white cornmeal
2	large	eggs
1 1/2	cups	buttermilk
3	tablespoons	melted smoked bacon dripping, or in a pinch substitute butter or olive oil

Preheat oven to 425F. Combine the first 5 dry ingredients and stir until well mixed. Then stir in the cornmeal. Stir the liquid into the dry ingredients. In separate bowl, combine eggs, buttermilk and drippings and beat until smooth.

Have ready 1 1/2 cups Hormel Cracklings. I like the cracklings chopped up kind of fine. Toss out any that might break a tooth. Hormel's the best brand, unless you can get some from a BBQ place that does a lot of pork and sells the skin as cracklings. Add and stir the cracklings into the batter with a few quick strokes. Pour batter into a preheated 10 inch cast-iron skillet greased with bacon drippings. Bake for

twenty-five minutes at 425F on the oven's top shelf. Serve with barbecued pork-enhanced bean soup, and try dunking the crackling corn bread into the soup as you would a steak sandwich into au jus sauce.

13. Barbecue portion size

 [How much should I cook of the following items to feed 25 men for supper? Brisket, Baked Beans
 Coleslaw]

David S. Gerard-- (Editor--David is a professional chef)

Industry standards are for 4-5 ounces cooked weight for meat and 6 ounces for sides. Assume a 25-35% shrinkage for the brisket. The fact that it is all men means you probably won't be serving gala appetizer trays. I would suggest two 8-10 pound briskets. This allows a good safety measure and maybe a little doggie bag. Extra beans can be prepared as they freeze extremely well (if made from dry beans, not doctoring up the canned variety.) Dried beans swell to three-fold weight so I'd start with 5 pounds dry beans. Shred 9-10 pounds raw cabbage for your slaw. These figures are generous, but you don't want 25 hungry men looking at you across the table. Some nice buttermilk country biscuits or sweet cornbread (with whole corn in it) would be nice.

Editor--now, if you're planning on entertaining 25 guys from the BBQ List for dinner, triple all amounts.

14. Problems while barbecuing--What went wrong?

 [I tried to smoke a 3 lb. sirloin tip roast yesterday. Held 220F as best I could (you know how that is). Had rubbed it with pepper and garlic after oiling the outside, hit it with oil once more and sprayed it with water every hour or so. Was on for nearly 6 hours and the internal temperature never exceeded 138F It was rather dry inside.]

Ed Pawlowski--

My guess is that while you were waiting for the temperature to go up, the roast was just drying out. I've done sirloin tip, but for less time and it was good. Could be that it was just a dry tough piece of meat anyway.

 [I'm new at barbecuing. I finally broke down and bought me a New Braunfels smoker. The problem is the meat turned very black and was bitter (especially the briskets). I expected some blackening of the meat due to the smoke but the briskets were so bitter my dogs laughed at me. Any help would be appreciated.]

Ed Pawlowski--

The bitter and dark smoke you encountered was from having too big a fire dampered down too low. You want a small amount of fuel burning to make the temperature you need. Smoldering will produce heavy smoke and give the meat a bitter taste. Open the dampers and control the temperature by the amount of fuel. If it gets too hot, instead of closing the damper, open the door to release the heat. Most of all, practice. You will get better each time.

Tom Kelly--

First piece of advice from a Q-newbie like me would be ignore the NB instructions to use the exhaust damper. The group says, and I follow their advice, to leave the exhaust damper wide open. Otherwise, you can get incomplete combustion and the bitter creosote flavor.

Belly--

Rule 1----small fire, open inlet damper

Rule 2----big fire--- you get burned, bad-tasting meat

Rule 3----small fire, six pack, good meat, ten hours slow cooking

Rodney Leist--

Probably one of the biggest hazards to great tasting barbecue is stale smoke. The reason for including a few words about this subject here is because bad wood is often blamed for bitter tasting barbecue. More often than not, the real culprit is smoke that has been trapped in the meat chamber and allowed to cool and condense on the meat. ALWAYS leave the exhaust vent completely open to prevent smoke from becoming trapped and cooled in the meat chamber. Use the inlet vent to control the fire. Trapped smoke picks up bitter flavors from creosote buildup in the chamber, cools, and deposits them on the meat, just like a rain cloud. Stale smoke can also be caused by the fire cooling too much due to lack of attention or attempting to add too much cold wood into the fire chamber. No matter what the cause of stale smoke, the meat comes out the loser.

Editor--

The ideal situation in a wood-burning smoker is for the fire to have all the oxygen (air) it needs for complete combustion of the wood. This gives the cleanest-burning fire and the cleanest, best tasting smoke. So keep that fire no bigger than necessary and that inlet air damper mostly open.

[I purchased a Brinkmann charcoal water smoker last year. I'm having some problems with temperature control. The temperature drops as the hours go by even though I have the same size fire. Any ideas on this?]

Scott Mark--

When you light a big pot of charcoal, with the smoker top portion off, there's plenty of oxygen available. All the coals get burning; all the coals get hot; all the coals give off a lot of heat. (Editor--the same applies when you start a fire in a bullet water smoker where the fire pan section cannot be removed from the smoker section.)

When the smoker top gets put in place (or the fire door closed), the air flow gets cut back quite a bit. The coals slow their burning rate, and they don't generate as much heat. The overall amount of heat being transferred into the smoke chamber is less. As the charcoal burns, ash accumulates, further reducing airflow. The only solution I've found that works well is to lift the entire smoker off of the firepit (my smoker is actually three parts: fire pit, cylinder, and dome top) and then use a shovel to dump the burning charcoal on top of a grate (getting rid of ash, which is also removed from the firepit) and then reloading the firepit with the burning charcoal and more that is already burning. Because of the lack of airflow, adding non-burning charcoal to the pit doesn't do much good.

Editor--See Section 7.2.1 for modifying this type of smoker. In most bullet water smokers you cannot remove the smoking chamber from the firepit chamber--they are fastened together. So the only way to remove the built-up ash is through the fire door. Until you make the changes that allow the smoking chamber to lift off the firepit, use a poker to get the ashes out of the firepit pan. Be careful if you have the smoker on a wooden deck as the hot ashes and bits of burning charcoal may set the deck on fire.

[I smoked a brisket. It tasted great but had the texture of old tires. It was still juicy but was very gristly and sinewy. Did I overcook it?]

Rick Thead--

It was undercooked. Brisket is just about the nastiest piece of meat out there. It really has to be cooked past the point of 'doneness' to be edible. But, IMHO, when cooked properly, it's the best BBQ there is.

If you are having trouble keeping the temperature on the smoker up, then smoke it as long as you can for flavor, then wrap it in heavy duty foil and finish it in a 250 to 275F oven. I'm not recommending this as a preferred method, but in some cases, it's the only way to go.

Here's how to tell if a brisket is ready: check it by feel. I happen to use one of those small instant-read thermometers to track how the meat is doing. I found that I can tell by the feel when I insert it in the meat if the meat is 'done.' You could also use a carving fork, but try not to poke any more holes in the meat than necessary. When you can feel that the thermometer glides in without any resistance, it's done. If you feel any resistance (it feels like it's hitting gristly meat), it's not ready yet. If you've ever cooked corned beef (usually brisket) the principle's the same. Anyway, if you check the meat periodically, you'll be able to detect the shrinkage of the tough part. Shoot for about 160F internal temperature.

 [Is it possible to over-smoke something? The last time we smoked some meat, it had a very harsh, acrid taste that was not appealing. Simply put, it was sour!]

Larry Willrath--

Sounds like you might have gotten hold of some green wood or your smoker is very dirty. I would check the type and age of the wood and the condition of your smoker. I use some green wood but try to limit it to a 1-hour burn or not to exceed 15% of the total smoke cycle.

Frank Boyer--

I once cooked a large quantity of ribs and left 10 to 20 slabs sitting in the cooker after I served. The slabs pulled out when they were done were good, but the ones that sat in the cooker after I stopped putting wood in had a very bitter taste. What I am guessing happened is that after the fire died down the smoldering wood imparted the bitter taste on the slabs. So what might have made the difference on your parent's "over-smoked meat" was that the fire died down, started smoldering and caused the bitter taste. I have cooked brisket up to 16 hours and whole hog for 25 hours and never had a bitter taste problem. Some people say preburning the wood will eliminate the bitter taste.

Editor--If you are going to leave barbecue in the smoker to keep warm after you have finished smoking it, wrap it in foil to prevent what happened to Frank's ribs.

Mike Cain--

I've run into situations of using green or wet wood--beware of molds or other natural fungi that can grow on the bark of these pieces. There are some pretty scary-looking and smelly grungies that can accumulate on certain pieces of wood which could affect the flavor of the smoke, especially at lower temperatures. Pre-burning will eliminate most of these problems.

 [I recently purchased NBBB smoker. I keep running into the same problem when I try to smoke briskets and ribs. There is too much smoke. The ribs have a smoke ring all the way through them, and the brisket is way too smoky. When I cook the ribs, I use a lot of regular charcoal, and only one 12" piece of hickory. What do you suggest?]

Stephen J. O'Connor--

I had the same problem with my OK Joe of a similar design. I was burning straight wood, though. The problem with these units is the temptation to build a fire big enough that you don't need to tend it so much. I kept having to choke my fire down after getting it going. I made the mistake of trying to control my fire with the exhaust vent, rather than the intake. This resulted in stagnant smoke and a sooty flavor. Be moderate with your fire, even though it will mean more tending. Regulate from the intake rather than the exhaust, even though it is slower to respond. Lastly, give up charcoal briquettes and get lump charcoal--it gives a much cleaner flavor.

Frank Boyer--

Try using 2-3" chunks of flavor wood. Hickory is one of the strongest woods; pecan is mellower. Make sure that you have a good air flow through the pit. Don't control the outlet airflow (exhaust). If the smoke smells nasty the meat will taste nasty.

 [My first attempt at smoking a brisket in my NBBD was nothing to write home about. I started with lump charcoal and then moved to wood for a total of about 14 hours at 200-220F as best I could hold it. I took the brisket straight out of the pit and into the freezer. Pulled it out today and popped it into a 250F oven, foiled, for about 3 hours. It is smoky, no doubt about it. The Mr. Brown is a bit bitter so I cut most of that off. The meat is VERY tender but a little dry. It tasted much like a mild pot roast with little flavor other than smoke. I did marinade it overnight in a concoction of beer, Dr. Pepper, and various spices. It was 8 pounds. Any help?]

Danny Gaulden--

Here's why your brisket was not up to expectations:

1. You should have kept your smoking temperature between 225-250F. You smoked at too low a temperature.
2. Total time shouldn't have been over 10 hours for an 8 pound brisket.
3. One reason it was too smoky is because you smoked it too long and too slow. With a little hotter fire, your smoke density would have been considerably less and your smoking time shortened. Using lump is a good way to decrease the smoke also, as well as preburning your wood.
4. The reason your brisket was "very tender but a little dry" is this: You overcooked it. A brisket is suppose to be "tender and moist", not "very tender and dry". If you smoke it to the point of being "very tender", there is a good chance it is overcooked and will also be dry.
5. The pot roast flavor came from warming your brisket in foil in the oven from the frozen state. You should have let it thaw in the refrigerator, then just warmed it up in foil to serving temperature in the oven. And I mean just warm--no more cooking.
6. Forget the marinade. Use a good rub, mop with a good mop every hour, and turn the brisket over every hour or so while barbecuing it in your pit. Guarantee you will see a big difference in your end product.
7. I don't have to turn my meat over in the pit at the D. Q., for it is a rotisserie. Cooking on a stationary pit without a good baffle system, or convection tube, is another ball game. You must mop and turn the meat every two hours or so. If you don't, it will dry out on the bottom side from constant heat pounding.

 [I did some ribs yesterday and although they were quite edible I would have thought that they would be more tender. --snip-- According to Danny Gaulden, the ribs should not take nearly as long as the roast but they came very close. Should I have wrapped the ribs earlier in the barbecue process or what?]

Rock McNelly--

Well, as far as your ribs not being as tender as you had expected, my guess is that they were cooked too long, at too high a temperature. Those bones really do help to cook the meat from the inside out, so it just doesn't take that long. By my calculations, your ribs cooked for 9 1/2 hours! That's way too long. Even wrapped, they boil off their moisture at that rate.

Most ribs can be cooked to perfection at 220F in 4 1/2 hours. Every once in a while you'll get an ornery pig that's a bit more tough than the average pig, and may go as long as 5 hours. But it's rare. Anything after 5 hours is just asking for rubber.

My advice would be to drop the temperature in your smoker back down to 225F when you're cooking both butts and ribs, 220F if just one or the other. If you can do it, place the ribs on a rack under the butts so that the juices from the butts will baste your ribs--keeps them moist.

 [I tried my second all-wood run in my NBBB and the finished ribs were very bitter. There was a lot of dense white smoke at various points during the 4 hours smoking time. I kept small pieces of wood set on the firebox warming plate and I set other pieces inside the firebox, along the walls, to ignite when they got ready. Once or twice, I had faint white smoke but it was only for an hour or so total time. To clear the stack, I had to crank open the inlet damper and the temperature went way high (250F+). When I'd close it back down to get a decent temperature, the fire would smolder and produce the thick white smoke. Can somebody help?]

Scott in Carolina--

How dry was your wood? Thick white smoke sometimes comes from wood that's not well-seasoned. I believe Ed P. gave an accurate description of how to tell if the wood is green or not. He says to rap two pieces together--"clink" = dry, "thud" = wet.

 [I think some was well-seasoned hickory and some was fairly green oak. I used both, but I did put it in the firebox until it caught on fire by itself after warming it up on the lid.]

Vince Vielhaber--

I use wood pieces with maximum length of 10-12 inches. I split each 2-3-inch diameter piece in quarters. Like you, I keep the ones next to be burned atop the warming plate of the NBBB. The only time I have a problem is when I get distracted and leave the pit unattended for a time, otherwise I can keep it within a 10 or 20F temperature range. Also, unless a fire gets too big, the inlet and outlet dampers should be wide open. As has been said here before, regulate the temperature with fuel, not air.

 [I guess my next question would be, how often do you tend the fire? I was hoping this would be like building fire in my fireplace for a cold winter day, occasionally tossing on a log or two, but that doesn't seem to be the case with the NBBB. I was out there either watching or stoking it every 30 minutes or so and still I had problems.]

Vince--

I usually tend the pit about once an hour. I did try something very different today. Every couple of hours or so, I put a bunch of small pieces of lump charcoal in the firebox to keep a good bed of coals going. Then as usual, I kept the split logs on top of the warming plate on the top of the firebox and added a piece of wood when necessary--about every hour. The piece of wood caught fire and was in flames almost immediately. Temperature control was a lot better this time, except when I got busy and forgot for to check on it for over an hour.

 [When I opened the firebox lid on my NBBD while I was doing ribs, I had flames shooting up past the top! Was my fire too big?]

Rick Otto--

You had MUCH too large a fire--too much fuel or too much air from the vent. I hardly ever open the firebox 'lid' as heat rises--I don't want to disrupt the temperature in the smoking chamber. I load fuel from the end.

Editor--

The techniques of fire and temperature control in a wood-burning pit are the most difficult for the beginner to master in the art of barbecuing.

A summary of what to do when you are starting out with your first wood-burning offset-firebox pit:

- 1) Try using lump charcoal until you get comfortable with your pit, or a combination of lump charcoal and wood.
- 2) Use only seasoned wood. Green wood = bad smoke = bad-tasting meat.
- 3) Make the fire only big enough for the job--this comes from experience. You want a small flame.
- 4) Keep the exhaust damper wide open.
- 5) Pre-warm the wood on or in the firebox or, better still, pre-burn the lump charcoal or wood and add burning pieces to the firebox.
- 6) If you add cold wood to the fire in the firebox, it can cool the fire and produce thick smoke, which will lead to bitter meat.
- 7) Learn to control your fire with fuel not the inlet damper.
- 8) Open the smoking chamber door to let out some heat if the fire gets too high and the smoking chamber gets too hot.
- 9) Add small pieces of wood to keep the fire going, about 1-1 1/2-inches in diameter by 10-12-inches long.
- 10) Generally, leave the inlet damper at least 1/2-3/4 open.
- 11) Make small changes to the air inlet damper.
- 12) If you're only using a smoker occasionally, it's hard to develop the techniques for good fire-control. The more you practice, the better you'll get.
- 13) Be prepared to check up on the pit every 30 minutes or so until you gain experience. If you want to watch the big football game, bringing the set out to where the pit's located is a lot more practical than bringing the pit into your TV room.

Editor--

If you are a newcomer to barbecue and have not yet purchased a smoker and think the problems associated with tending a wood-burning pit are not worth the hassle, then you may be a candidate for Lazy-Q. That's smoking on a gas or electric fueled pit. Many BBQ List members do just that, so you won't be alone. You can make some mighty fine barbecue the Lazy-Q way. However, you will miss out on one of the real pleasures that come from barbecuing--tending the wood-burning pit. There's just something special about building and tending a fire.

 [I'm going to be barbecuing in a competition at high altitudes. Any help on doing that?]

John Ross--

Plan on arriving a day early and do a test run with a slab of ribs at the target altitude.

15. Making Lump Charcoal

 [How can I make my own charcoal?]

Belinda M.--

Here is the recipe to make your own Lump Wood Charcoal

To make 30-40 lb. of charcoal, you will need:

- 1) A clean 55 gallon metal drum with the lid cut off roughly (you will be able to reuse this drum many, many times).
- 2) Enough seasoned wood to fill said drum, chopped into big fist-size pieces--about 5"x5", and the wood just needs to be a couple months seasoned, although the dryer the wood, the faster the process.
- 3) A bag of sand.
- 4) 3 or 4 bricks.
- 5) A case of beer (optional).

Start by punching or cutting 5 holes in the bottom of the drum which are each 2" square. Try to keep them towards the center. Put the drum down on the bricks, placed so it is up off the ground and fill it with the wood.

Start a fire in the drum. When it is going well, put the top back on to reflect back the heat. Since it was cut off roughly, there will be slight gaps to allow a draft.

Now, turn the whole thing over, placing it back onto the bricks. (This is where you might need the case of beer to convince several men to help you lift the sucker. It will be heavy. And mind the lid doesn't fall off!) Wait, consuming the beer as necessary.

The smoke will start out white. This is the water vapor burning off. Next the smoke will go blue/gray which is the alcohols and phenols burning off.

Then the smoke appears yellow, which is the tar burning off. Finally the smoke will clear and you will just see waves of heat. When this happens, carefully remove the bricks from underneath the drum. Take some sand and make a pile around the bottom of the drum, plugging up the bottom draft. Also, cover the top with either a piece of turf or a large piece of metal. Use sand to seal around the turf/metal so no air can get into the drum. We are trying for a closed system here. If air/oxygen/fire-fuel DOES get into the drum, the charcoal will just burn up. Not what we want. Also, try not to let the sand fall down into the drum through the holes.

Allow the drum to sit and cool (2-3 hours). Then turn back over, pry off the top and remove your charcoal. If there is a spark, the charcoal may "catch", but just douse it with some water. The charcoal will still be hot enough to dry out. Repeat above process as necessary.

By the way. I know this should be obvious, but, only use hardwood for your charcoal. By hardwood, I mean any broadleaf tree. Such as maple, almond, ash, alder, hickory, cherry, etc. You can use non-broadleaf wood (such as pines, firs and conifers) for charcoal but that charcoal will never get hot enough when it is burned. Therefore, it is only good for distillation purposes. Which, in itself, might be a handy tip. Also, this creates one heck of a lot of smoke, so don't make charcoal when the neighbor's laundry is outside on the line. (Of course, by now, you all would know that but, just in case there are a few who haven't really done a lot of smoking yet... a word to the wise and all that!)

Thanks to my brother-in-law, Don Whiting, who taught me how to do this.

16. Smoking chiles

[How do you smoke chiles to make chipotles?]

Bill Wight--

Chipotles (chi pote lays) are a Mexican specialty, made by smoking red Jalapeno peppers over mesquite wood. It's very easy to smoke chile peppers. I use an electric water smoker but any smoker will work. I pick the red chiles the morning I am going to smoke them. You can smoke just about any kind of chile, but to make authentic chipotles, use only Jalapenos. I use, in addition to Jalapenos, Jalapas and Fresnos. Use red peppers only, as the yellow, orange and green ones become a dirty color when smoked.

I wash the peppers and cut the tops off. I make one slit in the pepper from top to bottom and remove the seeds and membrane with a melon-baller. Wear gloves to do this or you will be hurting in a few hours. I like to leave the two halves attached and open the pepper up, as this makes each piece bigger and less likely to fall through the bars of the grill.

Start your smoker about an hour before you're ready to put on the peppers and get it up to temperature,-- 180-200F. I put 1-2 liters of water in the pan of my smoker and then cover the pan with aluminum foil and jab a few fork holes in it to let out the steam. The foil will catch any peppers that fall through the grill rather than them getting a bath. I use a third rack in my smoker and put it right on top of the water pan. Put the peppers on the grills cross-wise so there is less chance of them falling through the bars. The first few times I smoked peppers, I was careful to place them only one pepper thick on the grills. Now I just pile them on about 2 inches thick on each rack. They all get smoked fine. Close the lid and add smoking wood chips or chunks. I smoke mine for about 4 hours, until they turn a smoky dark color. You want to avoid burning the peppers. In my smoker, the outside perimeter of the round grills gets the hottest. So at about every hour, I take the grills out and rearrange the peppers, exchanging the darker ones from the rim with the less smoked ones in the middle. You will have to experiment with your smoker.

The next step is to dry the smoked peppers. A dehydrator would be the best piece of equipment for this, but since I don't have one, I use my gas oven. I set the temperature at 150F and it takes 8-12 hours to get the peppers dry and crispy. They are dry when you can crush them with you hand. When they are dry, I take about half of them and grind them in a small coffee grinder to a powder. The other half I leave unground and use them in adobo and barbecue sauces. Adding a few chipotle chiles to your favorite BBQ sauce gives it real nice kick. The powder is great sprinkled on food, in soups and on cream cheese spread on a cracker. Check the Chile-Heads recipe digest for recipes using chipotles and adobo sauces. (<http://neptune.netimages.com/~chile/>)

17. Books on barbecue

[Can you suggest the most useful books on barbecuing?]

List members like these barbecue and grill books:

"Smoke & Spice" by Cheryl and Bill Jamison is excellent. A must read for the new barbecuer. Editor--we agree.

"Barbecuing & Sausage Making Secrets" by Charlie & Ruthie Knot. This is the book if you're looking for one that has good instructions on barbecuing and smoking techniques. Yes, it has recipes too. There are a lot of good books out there, but none can compare to the knowledge that's contained in this book. If you could only buy one book on BBQ, this is the one to have.

"Sublime Smoke" by Cheryl and Bill Jamison. "Where There's Smoke There's Flavor", by Richard Langer and Susan McNeill. I also like "Uncle Billy's Downeast Barbecue Book". It has some good recipes in it.

My favorite lately has been, "John Willingham's World Champion Barbecue and Marinades" by Jim Tarantino.

I like the Jack Daniel's "Old-Time Barbecue Cookbook" by Vince Staten. It is very informative; it even has a section on competition barbecuing, what to expect at the competitions, etc. Very good book.

"Hot Links and Country Flavors--Sausages in American Regional Cooking" by Bruce Aidells and Denis Kelly. The ordering number is ISBN 0-394-57430-3. The recipes are broken down for small batches--I like that. I guarantee, you'll make excellent sausage using it.

"Kansas City Barbecue Society Cookbook" has lots of recipes plus "Q" tips.

One of the better wood-smoking cookbooks I have is "The Smoked-Foods Cookbook - How to Flavor, Cure, and Prepare Savory Meats, Game, Fish, Nuts, and Cheese", by Lue and Ed Park. ISBN 0-81117-0116-6. It discusses basic principles including the different types of cookers. It is not specifically a BBQ book, but discusses smoke curing and preserving including brines, jerky, fish, sausage, and wild game. I have found it to be much more useful and informative than a book with 200 BBQ sauce recipes.

"All About Bar.B.Q Kansas City Style" by Rich Davis and Shifra Stein, ISBN 0-933579-00-4. A good introductory book. (Hard to find)

"The All American Barbecue Book", Rich Davis and Shifra Stein, ISBN 0-394-75842-0. If I were forced to chuck all my BBQ books, this would be one of the last to go. I think it has a pretty good survey of barbecue from the important areas and the recipes I have tried turn out well.

"Art of Grilling" by Kelly McCune

"Barbecued Ribs, Smoked Butts, and Other Great Feeds" by Jeanne Voltz I am a huge fan. If I had to settle for just one BBQ book, that would be the one.

"Best BBQ Recipes" by Mildred Fischer. I tried a lot of the recipes.

"Cook'n Cajun Water Smoker Cook Book" by Sondra Hester. Cook'n Cajun Division, Hamilton Industries, P.O. Box 3726 Shreveport, Louisiana 71133, Library of Congress Card Number: 84-71526

"Cutting Up in the Kitchen" by Columnist Merle Ellis. Anyone wanting to know more about meat should read this book. It'll even tell you how to get a couple of nice ribeye steaks for the cost of chuck.

"The Great Barbecue Companion Mops, Sops, Sauces, and Rubs", by Bruce Bjorkman.

"La Parilla: The Mexican Grill" by Reed Hearon. \$19.95 paperback

Chronicle Books, San Francisco. ISBN 0-8118-1034-8.

"License to Grill", by Schlesinger and Willoughby

"National Cowboy Hall Of Fame Chuck Wagon Cookbook", by B. Byron Price, Hearst Books, New York, ISBN 0-688-12989-7. The first half of the book is the history of the chuckwagon and the cooks out on the range. Some really interesting stuff here. The second half is recipes and interesting tidbits.

"The Passion of Barbeque", by The Kansas City Barbeque Society, ISBN 0-925175-02-1

"Paul Prudhomme's Louisiana Kitchen" If I could have only one Cajun cookbook, that would be it.

"The Quick and Easy Art of Smoking Food", by Chris Dubbs and Dave Heberle, published by Winchester Press, ISBN 0-8329-0462-7. It only has a drawing of a masonry oven, but it does have detailed diagrams with materials list for building a wood and a masonry smokehouse, plus descriptions of several other items including a smoking barrel with an underground pipe to feed smoke for cold smoking.

"Smokestack Lightning--Adventures in the Heart of Barbecue Country" by Lolis E. Elie.

"Tony Chachere's Cagun Country Cookbook"

"Tony Chachere's Microwave Cajun Country Cookbook"

I have used them for the last couple of years and like them both.

18. Where do I buy this barbecue stuff?

The Editor does not endorse the following. They are provided here for your convenience.

Some home smoker manufacturers:

BBQ Pits by Klose (713) 686-8720 (800) 487-7487 <http://houstonet.com/bbqpits/> Dave Klose

Belson Manufacturing Co. in N. Auyrora, IL. (800) 3323-5664

Brinkmann Corporation (800) 527-0717

Char-Broil (800) 241-8981

Hasty-Bake (800)-4AN-OVEN

JR Enterprises (800) 432-8187 - Arkansas

Lyfe Tyme in Uvalde, TX (210) 278-7262

Meco (800) 346-3256

New Braunfels Smoker Co. (800) 232-3398

Oklahoma Joe's (405) 336-3080 - Stillwater, Ok

Pitt's & Spitt's (800) 521-2947 - Houston

Smokaroma, Inc. (800) 331-5556

Smokemaster (512) 345-7563 - Austin, TX

Southern Pride in Marion, IL. (800) 851-8180

Weber (800) 999-3237

Specialty Ovens:

Traeger Industries (800) TRAEGER - makes a pellet burning oven

Cookshack (800) 423-0698 - a home-style electric oven using wood chunks for flavor.

Stovetop Smoker:

C.M. International - Cameron Model - (719) 390-0505

Sausage Making Supplies:

The Sausage Maker, Inc.

(716) 875-0302 - Fax

Barbecue Accessories:

Outdoor Cooking Store, White Bear Lake, Minnesota, (800) 426-6568

BBQ Pits by Klose sells many barbecue accessories and supplies, including quality thermometers. They also sell lump charcoal, wood and other items for your barbecue pit. (800) 487-7487.

<http://www.bbqpits.com>

The Barbecue Store - (888) 789-0650 (toll free) Has many BBQ items for sale. <http://www.barbecue-store.com/>

Cunningham Gas Products sells Polder digital meat thermometers at a discount to BBQ List members. Call Greg or Art at (800) 833 5998. Tell them you are a BBQ List subscriber.

Sausage:

Aidells Sausage Co. (800) 546-5795

Usinger's Sausage - (800)-558-9998- fine German sausages

Spices and BBQ Rubs:

Bueno's Chile - Albuquerque. (505) 625-9507

Chili & Spice Gourmet Foods (412) 343-2213 Fax (412) 831-2542

Hatch Chili Express - Fresh chiles (505) 267-3226

Head Country BBQ Rub (405) 762-1227.

Hi-Co Western Products (602) 834-0149 fax (602) 833-1374

Master Chef PAUL KIRK: championship seasonings (913) 626-6029

Mo Hotta-Mo Betta -hot sauces, powders and dried chiles (800) 462-3220

N'awlins Cajun & Creole Spices (800) 343-4609 (504) 566-0361

Old Southwest Trading Co.- Fresh chiles, powders, ristras
Jeff: (505) 836-0168 fax (505) 836-1682

Pendery's Spice Company-126 year old company
(800) 533-1870 (214) 741-1870 fax (214) 761-1966
Web page: <http://www.penderys.com>

Penzey's Ltd. Large selection of spices. (414) 679-7207 fax (414) 679-7878 Web page:
<http://www.penzeys.com> You can download and print out their entire catalog.

Southwest Specialty Foods (800) 536-3131

Spices, Etc.: (800) 827-6373

Van's Spice Company, Baltimore, Md., (410) 583-1643

Willingham World Champion Bar Be Cue - Marinades, rubs and BBQ sauces
(Memphis TN) (800) 737-9426

Corn flour, grits, etc.

Hoppin' John's (803) 577-6404

Custom Grill Covers:

Doris Conner (417) 442-3543 Fax (417) 442-3112

Wood for barbecuing:
Try these two Web sites for firewood

Silver Spur Firewood Company -- (817) 559-1326
<http://www.kroo.com/public/firewood/firewood.htm>

Southern-Belle Company -- (888) 637-1615 (toll free)
<http://galent.com/bbq/>

Magazines:

"On The Grill"
11063 Topeka Place, Cooper City, Fl 33026
Voice phone (954) 430-0282 Fax (954) 430-3430
E-Mail: OnTheGrill@aol.com
\$14.95 per year, 6 issues per year

Books:

Pig Out Publications (800) 877-3119 fax (816) 531-6113

Kansas City Barbecue Society (800)-963-kcbs

Discount Books on Barbecue from David Spriggs
order by email: Books369@aol.com discounts to 40%

19. Other Internet resources on barbecue

[Where can I read more about barbecue on the Internet?]

Visit the following pages and you will find links to many more. Happy surfing.

Dan Gill's Home Page

<http://members.tripod.com/~DanGill/Survive.HTML>

Garry's Home Cookin' Website

<http://www.tiac.net/users/garhow/cooking>

Garry's barbecue page is linked to the 'Smoke Ring' -- a group of many barbecue pages linked together for easy access.

Beef Chart

<http://www.frontier.net/~myhara/beef.htm>

Rick Thead's BBQ Web Page

<http://www.azstarnet.com/~thead/bbq/>

End of BBQ List FAQ Version 1.0