

THE BBQ PLAYBOOK

TRADITIONS, TRENDS AND TRAILBLAZERS

REDEFINING BARBECUE.

PAULIG^{PRO}

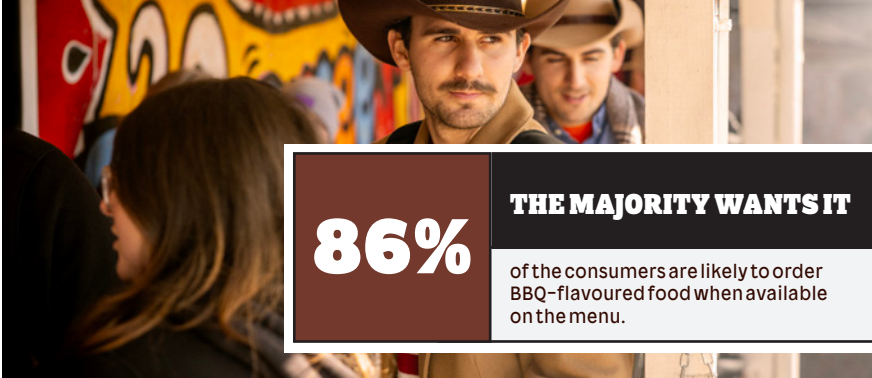


ROBERT PAULIG
ROASTERY

BBQ IS A BIG DEAL WITH HUGE APPEAL



Barbecue is more than a cooking method. It's a culture, a taste world and a business opportunity. By using BBQ flavourings and techniques you can turn simple ingredients into experiences that your guests will rave about in social media (and real life). We have teamed up with top pitmasters and BBQ pioneers to create this guide to the world of BBQ. Enjoy!

PROOF OF POPULARITY



86%	THE MAJORITY WANTS IT of the consumers are likely to order BBQ-flavoured food when available on the menu.
------------	---

SO MANY WATCH IT 13.6 M HOURS of Barbecue Showdown were streamed on Netflix in one week, pushing it into the global top 10 chart right after the launch of season 2.	 N THE EGYPTIAN COWBOY
--	---

 la BARBECUE	 MICHELIN 2024 EVEN THE PICKIEST APPROVE IT Despite its rustic food and simple cooking methods, several BBQ joints have recently earned Michelin stars.
--	--



As the Barbecue Editor at Texas Monthly, Daniel Vaughn is not just documenting the craft, he's shaping its future. Every four years, he leads the creation of the magazine's Top 50 BBQ Joints list – a definitive ranking that sends shockwaves through the BBQ community, making pitmasters famous and setting the tone for the entire industry. We had a smoky lunch with Mr. Vaughn and listened to him talk about the whole BBQ movement. Here's how he explained why it's so popular.



1. IT'S A TASTE EXPERIENCE

Think about the quality of the meats, the flavours, all the great sides and desserts that come with barbecue.

2. IT'S BUILT FOR SHARING

You're generally sharing it with a group of people. You bring your friends and family together to enjoy this bounty in front of you.



3. IT'S CULINARY MAGIC

You can turn a piece of really tough, inexpensive meat into something that's ridiculously tender and juicy with simple machinery and just wood as fuel. That's a remarkable thing.

BBQ

IN A NUTSHELL

NOT QUITE THE SAME AS GRILLING

Grilling and barbecuing might use the same cooking device, but they are different techniques. Grilling is about cooking small foods, hot and fast over direct heat, usually without a lid and with no smoke. Barbecuing is about cooking larger cuts low and slow, usually with smoke in a closed environment.

COOKING WITH CARIBBEAN ROOTS

The English word “barbecue” comes from the Spanish “barbacoa”, which in turn derives from a Taíno word for a framework of sticks once used to cook food over fire. The Taíno, an Indigenous people of the Caribbean, are credited with introducing the concept of barbacoa to European explorers.

SPOILER ALERT!

You'll find plenty of food for thought in this playbook.

A MATTER OF FIRE, MEAT AND MORE

Traditional BBQ is all about fire, smoke and slow-cooked meat. But the scene is evolving as plant-based options, global flavours and creative twists are making BBQ more inclusive than ever. BBQ is becoming more appealing to a wider audience while still honouring its smoky roots.



THE FLAVOURS OF BBQ

THE MAGIC OF BBQ LIES IN BLENDING THESE FLAVOURS INTO PERFECTLY BALANCED BITES.



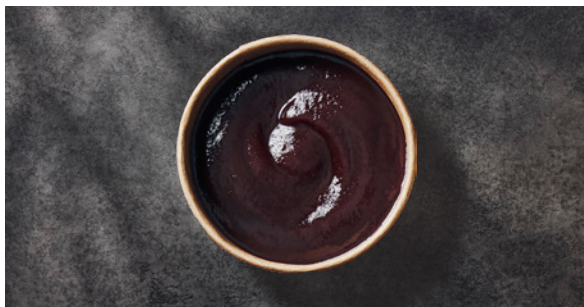
SMOKY

The deep and earthy aroma that comes from burnt woods or charcoal.



SAVOURY

The rich umami from meats but also seasonings like rubs and sauces.



SWEET

The sugary notes from BBQ sauces and fruit glazes balance smokiness.



SPICY

The pungent flavours from pepper, chili, mustard and paprika adds complexity.



TANGY

The acidic taste from tomato-based sauces, vinegar and pickles cut through richness.

EXPLORE THE UNITED STATES OF BBQ

As American BBQ culture has evolved over the years, distinct regional styles have emerged. Plenty of states and cities now have their own specials when it comes to meats, woods and sauces. Here's a guide to the signature components.



TEXAS

MEAT:
Brisket with just “dalmatian rub” (salt and black pepper)

WOOD:
Post oak

SAUCE:
Ain't no such thing as a typical Texas BBQ sauce.

If there was Texas signature sauce, it would probably be tomato-based and heavy on the black pepper.



KANSAS CITY

MEAT:
Glazed burnt ends (from brisket)

WOOD:
Hickory

SAUCE:
Thick, sweet, and tangy tomato-molasses-based sauce.

Sauces labelled as “classic” or “original” are usually KC style, which means this is most famous BBQ sauce



MEMPHIS

MEAT:
Pork ribs

WOOD:
Hickory

SAUCE:
Sweet, tangy and tomato-based

While many Memphis BBQ joints serve their ribs dry, with only a spice rub for flavouring, the sauce is always there for dipping.



NEW MEXICO

MEAT:
Carne adovada (pork marinated in red chile)

WOOD:
Mesquite

SAUCE:
Chile-based sauces

New Mexican food revolves around chiles, especially hatch varieties. Chipotle has also earned its place in the stews, rubs and sauces.



KENTUCKY

MEAT:
Mutton

WOOD:
Oak and hickory

SAUCE:
"Black Dip" with Worcestershire, vinegar and spices for mutton, but also bourbon-infused sauces

Thanks to the state's distilling tradition, limestone-filtered water and ideal climate, 95% of the world's bourbon is made in Kentucky.



SOUTH CAROLINA

MEAT:
Whole hog and pulled pork

WOOD:
Hickory and oak

SAUCE:
Carolina Gold with mustard and vinegar

South Carolina's German settlers blended mustard with vinegar to create the state's golden signature sauce.



ALABAMA

MEAT:
Chicken

WOOD:
Hickory

SAUCE:
Alabama White with mayo, vinegar, black pepper and cayenne

The mayo-based Alabama White was created by Big Bob Gibson in the 1920s. It was originally crafted to keep smoked chicken moist.

REGIONAL BBQ IS HOT

Regional American BBQ is headlining the trend reports as consumers want the real deal. It's no longer just ribs, but Memphis ribs. And people want to know what makes it Memphis. This calls for storytelling!



THE WOOD SCALE

POST OAK

Mild and subtle, not overpowering

HICKORY

Rich and robust, sweet and bacon-like

MESQUITE

Bold and intense, but can be sharp or bitter

TRADITION MEETS INNOVATION IN
THE NEW ERA OF BBQ



FROM THIS

Until about 20 years ago, American BBQ was all about tradition. Legendary institutions like Smitty's Market in Lockhart, Texas dominated the scene, sticking to time-tested recipes, familiar cuts and classic smoking techniques passed down for generations. These places have built their reputations on consistency – you know exactly what to expect. But while that consistency is comforting, it leaves little room for innovation and improvement.



TO THAT

Today, the BBQ landscape has changed dramatically. A new wave of pitmasters and BBQ joints has redefined the scene, blending respect for tradition with a drive to constantly improve the craft. Across the US, hundreds of independent operations are pushing boundaries: experimenting with different woods, curing methods, global flavours, specialty cuts and even modern cooking science to perfect their version of BBQ.

**"NOW THERE'S CRAFT BBQ
ALL OVER THE STATES"**

-Cole Parkman, pitcook at Leroy and Lewis BBQ

CRAFT IS KING

In many ways craft BBQ is to meat what craft beer or craft coffee is to brewing. It's a mix of heritage, creativity and cult-level devotion. Here are some other similarities.

SOURCING MATTERS

Craft coffee focuses on bean origin and terroir, while craft BBQ obsesses over the wood, the meat and the regional traditions.

SIMPLE FOUNDATIONS, DEEP MASTERY

Coffee is just beans and water, BBQ is just meat and fire – but mastery takes years.

LINE CULTURE

Just like fans line up for limited beer releases, BBQ devotees wait hours for brisket at iconic Texas joints, which has become a part of the experience.

ARTISANS BECOME ROCKSTARS

Roasters and pitmasters both build cult followings around their craft and become famous in a way that old school players didn't.

LOCAL PRIDE AND IDENTITY

BBQ pits and craft breweries often become cultural hubs, tied to community and regional identity.

EXPERIMENTS AND SIGNATURE STYLES

Just as roasters push flavour boundaries with fermentation or roast profiles, pitmasters experiment with rubs, woods and sides.





In 2009, Aaron Franklin and his wife Stacy opened Franklin Barbecue in a small trailer in Austin, Texas. With no reputation to rely on, Aaron focused on perfecting brisket – often considered the toughest cut to master. He applied almost scientific precision: controlling temperature, using post oak, simple salt and pepper rubs, cooks up to 18 hours and precise wrapping known as “The Texas Crutch”. The result was a juicy, tender, deeply smoked brisket that was revolutionary by the time.

The word spread fast. Foodies, BBQ fans and media followed. Bon Appétit named it “the best BBQ in America”. Anthony Bourdain and President Obama visited. 5-hour lines became the norm. But Franklin’s real legacy is how he changed the game of BBQ: sparking the craft BBQ movement, proving BBQ can evolve while honouring tradition, inspiring hundreds of new pitmasters across Texas and the world. His books have become essential guides and his influence defines today’s craft BBQ scene – where tradition meets innovation and precision.

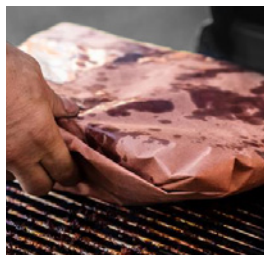
THE TEXAS CRUTCH



The Texas Crutch is all about getting past that stubborn stall without drying your meat out.

You wrap your brisket or pork shoulder tight in foil or butcher paper, lock in the juices and let it finish cooking. Some say it softens the bark a bit, others say it’s worth it to keep the meat tender and juicy.

THE STALL



The stall is that point in low-and-slow cooking, usually around 65–77°C for brisket or pork shoulder, where the meat seems to stop rising in temperature for hours. Pitmasters call it “stubborn” because it can feel like your smoker is broken, but what’s really happening is evaporative cooling. Moisture from the meat evaporates, cooling it and slowing the temperature rise.

THE BARK



The bark is the dark crust that forms on the outside of smoked meat, usually brisket. It’s a combo of seasoning, smoke and Maillard reaction (the chemical browning when proteins and sugars cook). A good bark is crusty and slightly chewy, contrasting with the tender, juicy meat inside. Pitmasters consider it a hallmark of proper low-and-slow smoking.

DIVE INTO THE WORLD OF BBQ

The new wave of pitmasters has definitely opened up the world of BBQ. While classic American styles remain the foundation and first point of reference, the BBQ landscape is evolving by embracing creativity and diversity like never before. Craft players are constantly looking for unique twists, ways to stand out, improve and refresh the menu. They draw inspiration from around the globe, incorporating flavours, techniques and traditions that expand the definition of BBQ. From the sweet-savoury marinades of Korean bulgogi to the smoky, communal fire of a South African braai, these global influences are reshaping what BBQ can be. The result is a BBQ landscape that's more diverse, inclusive, fun and exciting than ever.

AMERICAN BBQ

COOKING METHOD: Slow-smoking over wood
TOP DISHES: Ribs, brisket, pulled pork
KEY FLAVOURINGS: Rubs, sauces, smoke



ARGENTINIAN ASADO

COOKING METHOD: Slow-grilled over open fire/embers
TOP DISHES: Ribs, brisket, pulled pork
KEY FLAVOURINGS: Coarse salt, chimichurri, minimal spices



JAMAICAN JERK

COOKING METHOD: Grilling or smoking over pimento wood
TOP DISHES: Chicken, pork, fish
KEY FLAVOURINGS: Allspice, chili, bay leaf



KOREAN BBQ

COOKING METHOD: Tabletop grilling with gas or charcoal
TOP DISHES: Pork belly, short ribs, marinated beef
KEY FLAVOURINGS: Soy sauce, garlic, gochujang



TURKISH MANGAL

COOKING METHOD: Charcoal grilling
TOP DISHES: Kebab, meatballs, chicken wings
KEY FLAVOURINGS: Salt, pul biber, herbs



SOUTH AFRICAN BRAAI

COOKING METHOD: Open fire cooking or charcoal grilling
TOP DISHES: Sausage, lamb chops, skewers
KEY FLAVOURINGS: Salt, black pepper, garlic



TWO STYLES TO KEEP AN EYE ON

Korean BBQ and South African braai have emerged as two of the most captivating barbecue styles worldwide. They both attract food enthusiasts with their unique flavours and communal dining experiences. Beyond their culinary appeal, these styles are also gaining traction in the commercial food industry, reflecting a broader shift in consumer preferences toward interactive and culturally rich dining.



KOREAN BBQ

Korean barbecue blends ancient traditions with royal court recipes and regional flavours. This BBQ style is renowned for its interactive grilling at the table, where diners cook their own marinated meats, such as beef short ribs (galbi), pork belly (samgyeopsal) and thinly sliced beef (bulgogi), on built-in grills. Accompanied by a selection of sides (banchan) like kimchi, pickled vegetables and seasoned greens, the meal becomes a ritual as much as a taste experience.



SOUTH AFRICAN BRAAI

South African braai is more than just a cooking method – it's a cultural institution that brings people together around an open flame. Lamb chops, steaks, sausages (boerewors) and skewered meats (sosaties) are grilled over wood or charcoal fires, imparting a distinctive smoky flavour. The braai is often accompanied by side dishes like maize porridge (pap), spicy relish (chakalaka) and salads, creating a hearty and flavourful meal.

MEAT-FREE BBQ OPTIONS

As barbecue culture evolves, vegetarian options enter the stage. Ingredients like grilled veggies and marinated tofu prove that BBQ is no longer just for meat lovers.



TOFU

Choose firm or extra-firm tofu, press it to remove excess water and marinate for 30–60 minutes to infuse flavour. Grill over medium heat to avoid sticking and baste with sauce near the end to avoid burning.

JACKFRUIT

This remarkable fruit is perfect for creating a plant-based pulled pork-ish. The jackfruit can be pre-cooked with BBQ sauce until tender. Finish it off on the grill for added smokiness.



CAULIFLOWER

Slice into thick “steaks” or use whole florets, the season and brush with oil. Grill over medium-high heat, turning frequently to cook through without burning. Par-boil thicker pieces if needed.

HALLOUMI

This Cypriot cheese grills beautifully without melting. Cut into thick slices, brush with oil and grill until golden with nice grill marks. Serve hot with a squeeze of lemon or herbs for extra flavour.



MUSHROOMS

Portobello or king oyster mushrooms work well thanks to their hearty texture. Marinate them briefly, then grill over medium heat until tender, basting with sauce to keep them moist and flavourful.

VEG. MINCE

If making patties or skewers, bind with bread-crumbs or flaxseed to help hold shape. Grill over medium heat and avoid flipping too soon to prevent breaking.



PERFECT DRINK PAIRINGS

When it comes to drinks, some clear patterns show up across the world of BBQ. Beer is the classic everywhere, but wine and cocktails are increasingly popular, especially with more diverse BBQ traditions. Non-alcoholic drinks are also becoming more important as gatherings include wider preferences.



BEER

Light lagers, pilsners and wheat beers are safe bets as they're refreshing and cut through smoky, fatty flavours. Hoppy IPAs pair well with spicy rubs and grilled meats. Dark beers like stouts and porters can match sweeter BBQ sauces or smoked brisket.

WINE

Red wines like Zinfandel, Shiraz/Syrah, Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon are bold enough for ribs, steaks and brisket. White wines such as Sauvignon Blanc or Chardonnay are refreshing pairings for chicken, fish and grilled veggies.

COCKTAILS

Margaritas, mojitos, and gin & tonics are popular in hot-weather BBQs. Whiskey sours work well for smoky meats while sangria and spiked lemonades are easy to make in pitchers for groups.

NON-ALCOHOLIC

Iced teas and lemonades are BBQ classics. Or why not combine them 50/50 to make an Arnold Palmer? Craft sodas and kombuchas add a bit of contemporary flair while sparkling water with some fruit always are light and refreshing options.



FUSION IS THE FUTURE

Alison Clem and Kareem El Ghayesh are both celebrated pitmasters. They both run popular BBQ joints in Austin. And even though their styles differ, they both pair classic Texas BBQ with global influences. While Kareem takes it one step further, infusing entire dishes with flavours of the Middle East, Alison adds sides and flavourings from distant cultures to put her twist on the menu.

We met them both, tried their signature dishes and listened to their thoughts on merging culinary cultures.



I want people to come here for the traditional Texas barbecue, but I also want them to be a little bit surprised. We have our sweet pepper cucumber kimchi for example, because we ate a ton of kimchi in South Korea, and we

were like: I gotta have more of this. We also went to Vietnam and brought back some flavours that we loved. So, we have a fish sauce with mirin and some spices. You shake it up and that goes on the pork now.



"LOTS OF DIFFERENT IMMIGRANT CUISINES
ARE COMING INTO OUR BARBECUE SCENE
AND CHANGING IT FOR THE BETTER"

-Daniel Vaughn, Barbecue Editor at Texas Monthly



KAREEM EL GHAYESH **THE
EGYPTIAN
COWBOY**

I would say the star of our show here at KG BBQ is the brisket rice bowl. It's a perfect blend and you get a lot of items from the menu. A customer described this dish as a party in your mouth. It has so many layers and textures. It has a warm, fluffy rice cooked in turmeric, cinnamon and bay leaves. We add smoked brisket, cut in chunks. Then we put a fresh baladi salad with tomato, cucumber and onion in there. And that's very vinegary. We put on tahini sauce to bring it all together. Then we top it off with cinnamon-sugar nuts to get something sweet and crunchy. And finally, we add the pomegranate jewels.



**"THE FUTURE OF BARBECUE
IS HEADED TOWARDS FUSIONS"**

- Kareem El Ghayesh, pitmaster at KGBBQ

THE WORLD OF
BBQ

ICONIC FLAVOURS
 FOR MENUS ON FIRE



KANSAS CITY
 BURNT ENDS



MEMPHIS
 BABY BACK
 RIBS



KENTUCKY
 BEEF CHEEKS



NEW MEXICO
 PORK BELLY
 TACOS



SOUTH
 CAROLINA
 PULLED PORK



ALABAMA
 BBQ CHICKEN



SOUTH
 AFRICAN
 LAMB SÖSATIES



KOREAN
 BEEF
 SSÄM



FIND PRODUCTS, RECIPES AND MORE INSPIRATION AT
PAULIGPRO.COM