

# BARBECUE

UNBEATABLE RECIPES, TIPS & TRICKS FROM A BARBECUE CHAMPION

# SECRETS

Ron Shewchuk



## PORK

There was a time in the 1990s when pork producers decided that the public wanted to avoid fatty foods, so they fed and bred their hogs to a point where they were competing with skinless chicken breasts for a place on the diet-conscious yuppie's plate. They had forgotten one of the most profound barbecue secrets of all, the formula that says: **FOOD + FAT = FLAVOR**

And of all the fats, pork fat is one of the most flavorful. Thank goodness the North American palate has come to its senses and richer foods are once again socially acceptable. Pork producers have responded to this positive trend by offering cuts of pork that are worth eating again. When you choose pork at your local butcher shop or in the supermarket, look for nice lines of creamy fat around the meat and a rich, marbled texture in the muscle itself. Fat is what literally creates the sizzle when you grill, and without it your barbecued pork would taste like cardboard.

Fat is not only flavorful, it is supremely nutritious. Pig meat fed North America's earliest settlers, and as an inexpensive source of energy-packed protein it has always been a staple of working folks everywhere. And, of course, pork is the lead player on the competitive barbecue stage and the image of the happy pig is synonymous with barbecue culture. All hail the mighty pig, provider to us all!

# real RIBS BARBECUED

Serves 2 to 4

To get the taste of authentic barbecued ribs you need to cook them slowly the traditional way, in a water smoker or barbecue pit at a low temperature. This is how we do ribs in competition. You can also accomplish something close to this using indirect low heat on your covered charcoal or gas grill.

2 racks pork side ribs, St. Louis cut  
(with the breast plate attached)

2 Tbsp. | 25 mL prepared mustard

1 tsp. | 5 mL or so granulated garlic

1/2 cup | 125 mL Championship Barbecue Rub (page 51)

apple juice in a spray bottle

Ron's Rich, Deeply Satisfying Dipping Sauce  
(page 60) or your favorite Kansas City-style sauce

Prepare your smoker for barbecuing, bringing the temperature up to 200–220°F/95–100°C. Cut along the gristly part of the ribs to separate each rack from the breast plate. Remove the shiny membrane on the inside of the ribs.

Coat the ribs evenly with mustard on both sides. Sprinkle lightly with garlic, then give the ribs a medium coating of rub, coating the convex (inner) side first and finishing with the convex side facing down (this prevents the rub from getting smudged).

Let the ribs sit for at least 15 minutes or until the rub starts to draw moisture out of the meat and looks shiny.

Place the ribs, with the convex side up (∩), on the cooking grate or place the ribs on a rib rack. Cook for 5 to 7 hours, depending on the size of the ribs, spraying with apple juice at the 3-hour point and then again about every hour or so.

At the beginning of the last hour of cooking, paint the ribs with a light coating of barbecue sauce.

Half an hour before the end of the cooking time, test the ribs for doneness. If they pass the pull test (see Barbecue Secret, top right), give them one more coat of sauce, wrap them in foil and return them to the cooker for another half an hour or so.

Remove from the cooker and let the wrapped ribs rest for 20 to 45 minutes. Unwrap, cut into single ribs, and serve with your favorite accompaniments.

## BARBECUE

### ≈ SECRETS ≈

To test ribs for doneness, use the pull test. Grab the outer two ribs with your thumbs and forefingers and gently pull them apart. If they are bonded tightly, the ribs are not yet done. If the meat pulls apart easily, the ribs are ready to take out of the cooker.



Pork rib membrane is slippery and frustrating to remove unless you use this technique: separate a corner of the membrane from the rib cage with a sharp knife. Using a dry paper towel as a gripper, grab the loosened membrane and peel it off the ribs with steady pressure, reestablishing your grip as more membrane comes off. Once you have removed it, trim off any excess fat from the ribs, along with any remaining bits of membrane.



# championship BARBECUE RUB (a.k.a. bob's rub)

makes about 3 cups | 750 mL

The Butt Shredders call this Bob's Rub, and it's what we use in competition. Bob Lyon, the granddaddy of barbecue in the Pacific Northwest, shared this at a barbecue workshop that first introduced me to the joys of real barbecue and prompted me to become a barbecue competitor. It follows a rule of thumb that's worth remembering: a third, a third, a third. Which means one-third sugar, one-third seasoned salts, and one-third dry herbs and spices.

**1 cup | 250 mL white sugar**

**1/4 cup | 50 mL celery salt**

**1/4 cup | 50 mL garlic salt**

**1/4 cup | 50 mL onion salt**

**1/4 cup | 50 mL seasoning salt (I like Lawrey's)**

**1/3 cup | 75 mL chili powder (use a commercial blend, or if you want an edge, try a combination of real ground chiles like ancho, poblano, New Mexico or guahilla)**

**1/3 cup | 75 mL black pepper**

**1/3 cup | 75 mL paprika**

To this basic rub add as much heat as you want, using cayenne pepper, hot paprika or ground chipotles. Then add 2 or 3 signature spices to suit whatever you're cooking or your personal taste, like powdered thyme, oregano, cumin, sage, powdered ginger, etc. Add only 1 to 3 tsp. / 5 to 15 mL of each signature seasoning so as not to overpower the rub.

## SAUCES

Texas red sauce. Eastern North Carolina mustard sauce. North Alabama white sauce. Louisiana Creole-style sauce. The list of regional American barbecue sauces goes on and on, and rivalries between states, regions and restaurants continue unabated. And never mind which sauce to use. There's a big debate about whether real barbecue should have any sauce at all, and some of the oldest barbecue restaurants in America don't even offer sauce to customers. On the other hand, most definitions of barbecue include a reference to sauce, and just about every barbecue cook has his or her own unique take on it. In my opinion, sauce is one of the things that defines barbecue. Its sweetness and acidity contrast with, and therefore help to intensify, the savory flavor of the meat. Think of these recipes as starting points for you to devise your own signature sauce.

# ron's rich, DEEPLY SATISFYING dipping SAUCE

(WITH ACKNOWLEDGMENTS TO THE BARON OF BARBECUE, PAUL KIRK)

### BARBECUE ~SECRET~

Use sauce sparingly when grilling or barbecuing meat. In competition we use it only as a finishing glaze. If you baste meat with a sugary sauce more than an hour before you take it out of the smoker or more than a few minutes before removing it from the grill, it will turn black when the sugar caramelizes from the heat. Also use sauce sparingly when you serve, offering it to guests on the side. Too much sauce and you lose the barbecue flavor you've worked so hard to achieve!

Makes about 6 cups | 1.5 L

Any student of barbecue has to bow in the direction of Kansas City once in a while, and Paul Kirk is one of the world's greatest barbecue cooks and also perhaps its best-known ambassador. Paul has taught thousands of cooks the essentials of barbecue, and this rich, sweet, tangy sauce is based on his Kansas City classic.

2 Tbsp. | 25 mL powdered ancho, poblano or New Mexico chiles

1 Tbsp. | 15 mL ground black pepper

1 Tbsp. | 15 mL dry mustard

1 tsp. | 5 mL ground coriander

1 tsp. | 5 mL ground allspice

1/4 tsp. | 1 mL ground cloves

1/2 tsp. | 2 mL grated nutmeg

up to 1 tsp. | 5 mL cayenne, according to your taste

1/4 cup | 50 mL neutral-flavored oil, such as canola

1 onion, finely chopped

6 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1 shallot, minced

1/2 cup | 125 mL tightly packed dark brown sugar

1 cup | 250 mL white vinegar

1/2 cup | 125 mL clover honey

1/4 cup | 50 mL Worcestershire sauce or soy sauce  
or a combination

1 tsp. | 5 mL liquid smoke or hickory smoked salt (optional)

1 32-oz. | 1-L keg of ketchup

Mix all the spices together and set aside. Heat the oil in a big pot over medium heat and gently sauté the onion, garlic and shallot until tender. Add the spices and mix thoroughly, cooking for 2 or 3 minutes to bring out their flavors. Add the remaining ingredients and simmer the mixture for 30 minutes, stirring often (be careful, it spatters). Don't cook it too long or it will start to caramelize and you'll have spicy fudge. If you want a very smooth sauce, blend with a hand blender or food processor. Preserve as you would a jam or jelly in mason jars. Use as a glaze or a dip for barbecued meats, or as a flavoring sauce in fajitas.

Excellent  
- watch cayenne  
- can use ground dried  
chilis  
- add tomato at the  
end