

Download and Keep!



# BBQ smoking tips from the pros

*We've dug deeper than the average advice, to bring you tips you normally only pick up around the campfire. So learn exactly what BBQ champions of the deep south rely on for perfect flavour. Or how to hot smoke ribs that you'll remember forever. These are the tips you won't find anywhere else. To make 2023 your most amazing summer on the BBQ yet.*

## 1. Don't make the 'bark' too thick

Chef David Lagonell, of Smokehouse Islington explains how to create the perfect 'bark' casing on a slow-cooked cut like pork shoulder:

"Boston Butt (whole pork shoulder) can take up to 10 hours, give or take, depending on the size, so don't use an excessive amount of wood or charcoal. If you do, the temperature will rise too quickly creating a bark that's too thick for further smoke to penetrate the meat with flavour. Do not open the smoking chamber - unless you really have to, as you delay the process and alter the temperature and humidity that's already been created. Once the meat has reached 90C or above you can take it out and let it rest for as long as possible. It's a long but uncomplicated process, it's most definitely a labour of love.



## 2. Treat charcoal like an ingredient



BBQ and fire expert Genevieve Taylor shares the ingredient you might have forgotten:

"I spend a lot of time talking about choosing the right charcoal. I think people spend a lot of time deciding on which BBQ to buy, and then just buy any old charcoal to go on it. Think of charcoal as an ingredient and spend time sourcing it carefully. You wouldn't spend ages sourcing great quality meat to then cook it badly, so treat charcoal in the same way. A lot of mass-produced charcoal is packed with chemicals (which is necessary to suppress its flammability when it's traveling thousands of miles), however this then affects the flavour of the food you're cooking on it.

I'm a very big advocate of people sourcing sustainable British charcoal. The act of making charcoal is a very ancient art that evolved in the bronze age. It's very interconnected to woodland management and it's a really positive thing for conservation and biodiversity. Making charcoal is one of the ways that people can make money from woods and therefore keep them thriving."

## 3. The secret to 18hr cooking

The "Minion" method, developed by American BBQ competitor and enthusiast Jim Minion, is perfect for a long slow smoke. Light all the coals at once, and the BBQ only lasts a few hours. Instead, pour unlit coals into the BBQ coal basket, and arrange in a horseshoe shape. Tuck or sprinkle wood chips around the unlit coals. Then pour a small number of lit coals into the gap. The fire will steadily burn through, generating smoke, and keeping the smoker going for 6 to 18 hours. The constant slow burn also helps to keep the hot smoking temperatures more stable.



Download and Keep!



## 4. Avoid the BBQ 'stall', using the Texas Crutch

Around 2-4 hours into cooking, depending on joint size, the temperature of uncovered meat stops rising, and can even fall. This is called the BBQ "stall", and happens as any extra heat is used to evaporating more water from the meat, and there is no increase in internal temperature. Pro BBQ competitors avoid this by wrapping a brisket, pulled pork or ribs in plenty of aluminium foil when the internal temperature reaches 70 to 75°C. A little stock (for beef) or apple juice (for pork) can also be added before the foil is sealed. The aluminium wrapped meat parcel is placed back in the BBQ smoker and cooked until it reaches the desired final internal temperature - giving moister meat and shorter cooking times. The Texan origins of the technique - particularly its popularity with brisket - have given its name the Texas Crutch.



## 5. Replace water with sand... yes really



The jury is out on whether to put a pan of water at the base of the smoker during cooking. Most BBQ smokers have a water pan that sits above the lit coal basket. The body of water helps to keep the temperature stable during cooking, but some people feel it can be difficult to get the smoker up to temperature, and conversely if you're smoking a little high, it's tough to prevent the water from evaporating straight away. Instead, you can fill the pan with terracotta (a large flower pot base, wrapped in aluminium foil), sand or even gravel. Water is also important in keeping a moist environment inside the smoker. Too dry, and the smoke molecules won't be able to penetrate the meat; too wet, and the smoke flavours drips off the meat. The meat will form a slightly tacky outer layer - the pellicle - for perfect smoke absorption. Neither dry, nor wet. If you choose terracotta or sand over water, then additional moisture needs to be introduced through spraying (see next tip).

## 6. Spray dem ribs!

Meat needs moisture during hot smoking - and - if you're not using a water pan, spraying water around the inside of the smoker every 30 minutes to 2 hours helps to keep up the humidity. Some people spray beer, wine, apple juice, or even a mix of apple and soy sauce into the smoking chamber (using the type of spray bottle you might use to water house plants) every 30 mins to two hours.

The apple juice and soy mixture is used to enhance flavour and colour. It is also sometimes called the 'mop' - dabbed or 'mopped' directly onto the meat. However, if you're going to add sauce to the meats after cooking, there won't be much difference in taste. Here at Sous Chef, we just spray water.

