

# Cook BBQ at Home



Recipes with love from

**The Robot Book  
Club**

# **Cook BBQ at Home**

*Authentic Smokehouse Recipes from the Classic American Joint*

The Robot Book Club

*Copyright © 2026 Edward Benson*

*All rights reserved.*

*No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.*

*Published by The Robot Book Club*

# Table of Contents

Chapter 1 — Rubs, Sauces & Mops

---

Chapter 2 — The Meats

---

Chapter 3 — The Sides

---

Chapter 4 — The Sandwiches & Plates

---

Chapter 5 — Drinks & Sweets

---

# Preface

This book, and The Robot Book Club, is an experiment large scale AI generation. Every page, from layout to images to copy, was generated with zero human review.

The authoring and publishing teams were implemented in the Kaya scripting language. They were given only the input: American BBQ joint food.

This is the only page authored by a human: Hello there!

— Ted Benson

# Prologue

Barbecue. The word alone is a declaration of war, a territorial claim staked in smoke and fire. It's not one thing, never has been. Not some generic concept of "BBQ flavor" churned out by faceless corporations. That's for the tourists, the uninitiated, the faint of heart. This, this is about the real deal. The honest, uncompromising truth of regional American barbecue, the kind that stains your fingers and lingers in your memory.

For too long, the legends of Texas brisket, the vinegary bite of Carolina whole hog, the sticky sweetness of Kansas City burnt ends, or the spicy whisper of Memphis dry-rub ribs have been guarded secrets, tied to massive, custom-built pits in dusty towns. But the yearning for that deep, primal satisfaction isn't confined to state lines or commercial kitchens. It lives in the soul of every backyard pitmaster, every home cook who dreams of that perfect bark, that impossibly tender meat.

This book is for them. For the dedicated, the curious, the slightly mad. The ones who crave authenticity but aren't about to drop a year's salary on a steel monster. Because the truth is, the spirit of genuine barbecue doesn't demand a custom rig. It demands ingenuity, patience, and respect for the craft. It demands understanding how a simple charcoal kettle, expertly managed with a snake of briquettes, can coax out hours of clean smoke. How an everyday oven, with the right methodology, can replicate the low-and-slow breakdown of connective tissue, turning tough cuts into silken masterpieces. How a judicious wrap of butcher paper can push past the dreaded stall, preserving every drop of rendered fat and flavor.

This isn't about shortcuts; it's about intelligent adaptation. It's about the science of smoke and heat, yes, but more importantly, it's about the stories, the people, the centuries of quiet knowledge steeped in every rub, every sauce, every slow-cooked hour. It's about bringing that culture, that glorious mess, that taste of America, straight into your kitchen, your backyard, your life. The pilgrimage, thankfully, doesn't demand a road trip anymore. Just a willingness to get your hands dirty.

So, roll up your sleeves. The real work, the true pleasure, starts now.





# Chapter 1 — Rubs, Sauces & Mops

*The foundational layers of regional American barbecue, from Texas salt-and-pepper purity to Carolina vinegar tang.*

Barbecue is a religion, and its denominations are defined by what's in the squeeze bottle or the mop bucket. In the Carolinas, crossing a county line dictates whether you're dressing a chopped hog with ascetic, peppery vinegar or a sharp, yellow mustard. Texas purists will look at you sideways for using

anything more than coarse black pepper and kosher salt on a brisket, while Kansas City demands a thick, molasses-dark glaze, and Alabama quietly subverts the whole paradigm with mayonnaise and horseradish. These aren't just condiments. They are the geographic coordinates of American smoke.

Before you fire up the kettle grill or preheat the kitchen oven, you have to pledge your allegiance. The rubs that build the bark, the mops that sustain the meat through the long hours in the dark, and the finishing sauces that bring it all home—it all starts here. Mix your spices, pick a region, and let's get to work.





## The Memphis Heritage Dry Rub & Vinegar Baste

There is barbecue, and then there is Memphis—the undisputed capital of the dry-rubbed pork rib. In a town where smoke and spice are religion, true heritage barbecue doesn't hide behind a sticky, sweet tomato glaze. It relies on a fiercely savory, herb-forward dry rub and a thin, acidic vinegar mop to build flavor, layer by blistering layer, over hot coals. This is the alchemy born in back-alley brick pits and basement coal chutes: an uncompromising marriage of smoke, mustard seed, and vinegar that practically demands to be eaten with your bare hands, whether you're working with a backyard kettle or making do in an apartment oven.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1/2 cup</b>	American sweet paprika	<b>1 tbsp</b>	dried thyme
<b>1/4 cup</b>	garlic powder	<b>1 tbsp</b>	whole coriander seed
<b>1/4 cup</b>	mild American chili powder	<b>1 tsp</b>	ground allspice
<b>3 tbsp</b>	coarse kosher salt	<b>1 tsp</b>	MSG
<b>3 tbsp</b>	freshly ground black pepper	<b>1 cup</b>	distilled white vinegar
<b>2 tbsp</b>	whole yellow mustard seed	<b>1 cup</b>	water
<b>1 tbsp</b>	whole celery seed	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	hickory liquid smoke <i>if using the indoor oven method</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	ground celery seed	<b>2 large</b>	baby back or St. Louis cut
<b>1 tbsp</b>	dried oregano <i>crushed between your fingers</i>	<b>racks</b>	pork ribs <i>silverskin removed</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Mix the dry rub.**

Combine the paprika, garlic powder, chili powder, salt, black pepper, mustard seed, celery seeds, oregano, thyme, coriander, allspice, and MSG in a bowl, whisking thoroughly until evenly distributed.

- **Store the remaining rub.**

Transfer the blended spices to an airtight glass jar and keep in a cool, dark pantry for up to six months.

- **Brew the alleyway vinegar mop.**

In a small saucepan, combine the vinegar, water, and three tablespoons of the heritage dry rub, bringing it to a gentle simmer to dissolve the salt and hydrate the dried herbs.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. **Dry the meat and apply a light base coat.**

Pat the ribs completely dry and apply a very light dusting of the dry rub—about one tablespoon per rack—letting them sit at room temperature for thirty minutes.

### 2. **Dial in the fire with hickory or pecan wood.**

Stabilize your smoker at 250F. If using a charcoal kettle, set up the snake method with unlit briquettes and wood chunks. For the honest indoor workaround, preheat your oven to 300F.

### 3. **Set the bark and start the mop.**

Place the ribs in the heat and leave them completely untouched for the first hour to let the initial bark set, then begin basting generously with the warm vinegar mop every forty-five minutes.

### 4. **Wrap tightly to push through the stall.**

When the meat hits an internal temperature of 165F, it stalls and sweats; wrap the ribs tightly in heavy-duty aluminum foil with a splash of the mop to hyper-tenderize the pork.

### 5. **Uncover and look for the bend.**

After an hour in the foil, return the ribs naked to the grates to firm up the crust until they reach roughly 195F internal—when lifted from the center with tongs, the rack should bow deeply and the surface meat should tear.

### 6. **Rest the meat in a faux Cambro.**

Pull the ribs from the heat and let them rest for at least one hour in an empty, insulated dry cooler to allow the muscle fibers to relax and the juices to redistribute.

### 7. **Apply the Memphis dry finish.**

Just before slicing, dust the hot, glistening ribs liberally on both sides with the remaining raw dry rub to awaken the volatile oils in the seeds.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **Embrace the whole seeds.**

A true heritage rub utilizes whole mustard, celery, and coriander seeds for bursts of flavor and texture, but you can lightly pulse the mixture in a spice grinder if your crowd prefers a finer dust.

- **The sugar compromise.**

The historical original is strictly savory and sugar-free, but you can add two tablespoons of dark brown sugar if you prefer a slightly sweeter modern profile.

- **The indoor smoke workaround.**

If you are cooking in an oven, add the half teaspoon of liquid smoke directly to your vinegar mop; it is natural condensed wood smoke, not a chemical trick, and it works.



# Eastern North Carolina Whole-Hog Vinegar Sauce

Eastern North Carolina barbecue is a three-hundred-year-old communion of smoke, swine, and stinging acidity. This isn't the sticky, sugar-laden glaze of the Midwest; it is a thin, unapologetic baptism of vinegar and pepper designed to cut straight through the rich, rendering fat of a slow-smoked hog. It serves double duty as a tenderizing mop on the pit and a sharp, astringent dressing at the chopping block, shocking the palate back to life so you can keep eating.

## INGREDIENTS

**2 1/2 cup** apple cider vinegar

**2 tbsp** dark brown sugar  
*packed*

**1/2 cup** distilled white vinegar

<b>1 1/2 tbsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1 tsp</b>	smoked paprika
<b>1 tbsp</b>	crushed red pepper flakes	<b>3 tbsp</b>	Texas Pete hot sauce
<b>1 tbsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>		

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. **Combine the ingredients in a large vessel.**

In a non-reactive bowl, glass mason jar, or shaker bottle, add the vinegars, sugar, salt, spices, and hot sauce.

### 2. **Agitate until dissolved.**

Seal the jar tightly and shake violently, or whisk vigorously, until the salt and brown sugar are completely absorbed into the liquid.

### 3. **Steep the sauce at room temperature.**

Do not rush this. Let the mixture sit for a minimum of 4 hours, though 24 to 48 hours is highly recommended to allow the vinegar to extract the essential oils from the dried peppers.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **Apply as a mop to pecan-smoked pork shoulder.**

After three hours on the smoker, baste the meat lightly every hour. Leave the pork naked through the stall to build a dark, peppery bark.

- **Cook to temperature, rest, and pull.**

Take the pork shoulder to 190 to 195 degrees Fahrenheit until it probes like warm butter. Rest it in a faux Cambro cooler for a minimum of one hour, then pull the meat apart by hand rather than chopping it, preserving the long muscle fibers to soak up the sauce.

- **Dress the meat generously.**

Shake the jar violently to redistribute the settled pepper flakes, then pour a half cup directly over the pulled pork, tossing it like a salad before serving on cheap, soft white hamburger buns.

- **Adapt for everyday home equipment.**

A standard charcoal kettle using the snake method will effortlessly hold the low heat required for a proper outdoor smoke. For an indoor 300-degree Fahrenheit oven workaround, rely on a foil pouch smoke bomb and an honest tablespoon of liquid smoke in your overnight marinade.



## Western Carolina "Lexington Dip"

In the Piedmont region of North Carolina, one does not ask for barbecue sauce—one asks for dip. Born from the sweet-and-sour culinary memory of German immigrants and the industrial advent of Heinz ketchup, this is an uncompromising, watery, highly acidic mop designed for one purpose: cutting through the rich, rendered fat of a hickory-smoked pork shoulder. It is not a thick, syrupy glaze to be painted on at the end, but a sharp, penetrating finishing liquid that requires a full day of resting to let the crushed red pepper bleed its heat into the vinegar.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar	<b>1 tbsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1/2 cup</b>	distilled white vinegar	<b>1 tbsp</b>	crushed red pepper flakes
<b>1/2 cup</b>	water	<b>1 tbsp</b>	Texas Pete hot sauce
<b>2/3 cup</b>	ketchup	<b>1 tsp</b>	finely ground black pepper
<b>2 tbsp</b>	dark brown sugar	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	cayenne pepper

## PREPARATION

- **The meat requires hickory or oak smoke.**

For the home cook, pecan wood is an excellent, slightly milder substitute; leave the pork shoulder naked through the stall to build maximum bark, pushing for a target internal temperature of 190°F to 195°F until probe-tender.

- **Respect the rest.**

Upon reaching temperature, swaddle the shoulder tightly in heavy-duty aluminum foil and old towels, resting it in a dry plastic cooler—a faux Cambro—for a minimum of one hour to prevent catastrophic moisture loss.

- **Pull, do not chop, the meat.**

Long, intact strands of pulled muscle fiber act like a sponge, absorbing this thin, watery dip far better than cleanly sliced meat.

- **No smoker? Employ the snake method or the oven.**

On a standard 22-inch kettle, build a tightly packed semi-circle of unlit briquettes, top with hickory chunks, and light one end for a steady 12-hour burn; if weather forces you indoors, roast the seasoned shoulder at 300°F and unashamedly add a few drops of high-quality liquid smoke directly to the finished dip before tossing.

## INSTRUCTIONS

**1. Combine the ingredients in a non-reactive saucepan.**

Whisk together the apple cider vinegar, white vinegar, water, ketchup, brown sugar, salt, red pepper flakes, hot sauce, black pepper, and cayenne in a stainless steel or enamel pot, strictly avoiding raw cast iron or aluminum.

**2. Bring the mixture to a gentle simmer over medium heat.**

Do not let it reach a rolling boil, as this evaporates the volatile acetic acids; simmer for precisely 10 to 15 minutes until the sugar and salt dissolve and the ketchup emulsifies into a thin, red liquid.

**3. Remove from the heat and cool to room temperature.**

**4. Transfer the dip to a sealed container and refrigerate for at least 12 hours.**

This maturation period is non-negotiable, as the rest allows the dried red pepper flakes to rehydrate and bleed their capsaicin oils into the vinegar, marrying the flavors into a cohesive profile.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **Use half as a mop and half as a finishing sauce.**

Brush or spray the first half onto the pork shoulder during the last two hours of cooking to build a tangy bark, keeping the second half pristine to serve at the table or to dress a traditional red slaw.

- **This dip is virtually immortal.**

Due to the extremely high acid and salt content, Lexington Dip will keep in the refrigerator for months without degrading.



## Kansas City Classic Sweet & Smoky Sauce

This isn't the thin, vinegary mop of the Carolinas or the austere salt-and-pepper bark of Central Texas. This is the brass band of American barbecue—a thick, mahogany-dark, sweet, and sticky masterpiece born at the crossroads of American meatpacking. Built on a sturdy foundation of ketchup and blackstrap molasses, spiked with the essential, fruity tang of tamarind, and fortified with just enough heat to wake you up, this sauce coats ribs and chicken with a competition-worthy lacquer. And if you are stuck cooking in a fourth-floor apartment with a standard kitchen oven, a drop of liquid smoke in this pot is your honest, unapologetic ticket to the backyard pit.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 med</b>	yellow onion <i>very finely diced</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	tamarind paste or concentrate
<b>4 clove</b>	garlic <i>minced</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	Worcestershire sauce
<b>2 tbsp</b>	neutral oil or butter	<b>2 tbsp</b>	yellow mustard
<b>2 cup</b>	tomato ketchup	<b>1 tbsp</b>	dark chili powder
<b>1/2 cup</b>	dark brown sugar <i>tightly packed</i>	<b>2 tsp</b>	smoked paprika
<b>1/4 cup</b>	blackstrap molasses	<b>1 tsp</b>	coarse black pepper
<b>1/2 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	cayenne pepper
		<b>2 tsp</b>	hickory liquid smoke

## PREPARATION

- **Master the technical foundation of your meat before applying the sauce.**

A great Kansas City sauce requires perfectly smoked meat. Target 195°F for ribs and ensure they pass the bend-test. If you lack an offset smoker, use the charcoal snake method on a kettle grill with hickory wood to maintain a steady 225°F to 250°F ambient temperature, or wrap wood chips in foil for an honest indoor smoke bomb.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sauté the aromatics gently until limp and translucent.**

Place a medium, heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat, add the oil or butter, and cook the diced yellow onion for 5 to 7 minutes without aggressively browning. Stir in the minced garlic and cook for one additional minute until fragrant.

- 2. Bloom the dry spices in the hot fat to extract their essential oils.**

Add the chili powder, smoked paprika, black pepper, and cayenne directly to the onion mixture, stirring constantly for 60 to 90 seconds. Heating the dry spices in fat creates a much deeper flavor profile than simply boiling them later.

**1. Deglaze the pan and incorporate the remaining wet ingredients.**

Pour in the apple cider vinegar, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom. Reduce the heat to medium-low, then whisk in the ketchup, dark brown sugar, molasses, Worcestershire sauce, yellow mustard, tamarind paste, and liquid smoke.

**2. Simmer uncovered to meld the flavors and thicken the sauce.**

Bring the mixture to a very gentle simmer and let it cook for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent the sugars from scorching on the bottom. The sauce will deepen to a rich mahogany color.

**3. Blend the sauce for a competition-smooth texture.**

Remove the pot from the heat and use an immersion blender to purée the mixture until the onions and garlic are completely liquefied, ensuring a silky glaze for your meat.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

● **Let the sauce rest overnight before using.**

Allow the sauce to cool completely to room temperature, then store it in the refrigerator for at least a day before your cook to let the complex flavors harmonize. It keeps for up to two months.

● **Apply the sauce only during the final 15 to 20 minutes of your cook.**

Because of the high sugar content from the molasses and ketchup, this sauce will burn and turn bitter if exposed to direct heat for too long. Brush it onto your ribs or chicken at the very end of the cook so it can tack up into a sticky, glossy lacquer.

● **Do not omit the liquid smoke if you are cooking in a kitchen oven.**

Liquid smoke is simply real wood smoke condensed in water. If you are using the 300°F oven-and-smoke-bomb workaround instead of a charcoal kettle or stick burner, this ingredient is absolutely vital for an honest, authentic flavor profile.



## Central Texas Onion & Butter Beef Mop

This isn't some sticky, sugar-laden glaze engineered to mask mediocre meat. It is a purely functional, deeply savory elixir born from the old meat markets and vaquero pits of Central Texas. Built on a backbone of beef stock, butter, and a kiss of Tejano cumin, this mop exists to cool the brisket during the long smoke, build a peppery, mahogany bark, and remind you why you woke up at dawn to tend the fire. Dunk your smoked beef in it like they do at Cooper's in Llano, or swab it onto the meat when it stalls. Uncompromising, historic, and undeniably Texan.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>4 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter or rendered beef tallow	<b>1 tsp</b>	dry mustard powder
<b>1 med</b>	yellow onion <i>finely minced</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>4 clove</b>	garlic <i>smashed and minced</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	cayenne pepper
<b>1 tbsp</b>	coarse ground black pepper	<b>2 cup</b>	beef stock or bone broth
<b>1 tbsp</b>	paprika or chili powder	<b>1/2 cup</b>	Texas lager beer
<b>1 tsp</b>	cumin powder	<b>1/4 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar
		<b>1/4 cup</b>	Worcestershire sauce
		<b>2 tbsp</b>	Louisiana-style hot sauce

## PREPARATION

- **Render your trimmings.**

If you are cooking a brisket alongside this mop, trim the hard fat beforehand and slowly render it down in a saucepan. Using this liquid gold in place of the butter provides the ultimate, authentic Texas flavor.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Bloom the aromatics.**

In a medium saucepan, melt the butter or tallow over medium heat. Add the minced onion and sweat it until deeply softened and translucent, about 6 to 8 minutes, coaxing out its natural sweetness without hard-searing.

- 2. Awaken the spices.**

Stir in the garlic, black pepper, cumin, dry mustard, paprika, and cayenne pepper. Toast them in the hot fat for 60 to 90 seconds until highly fragrant and their essential oils are fully released.

**1. Deglaze with lager.**

Pour in the beer, scraping up any fond from the bottom of the pan, and let it reduce for two minutes to cook off the raw alcohol.

**2. Simmer and meld.**

Add the beef stock, apple cider vinegar, Worcestershire sauce, and hot sauce. Bring the mixture to a gentle boil, then immediately drop the heat to low and let it simmer uncovered for 15 minutes to unify into a rich, savory juice.

**3. Adjust and deploy.**

Taste for salinity, adding the kosher salt only if your beef stock hasn't provided enough. Keep it warm by the firebox for mopping every 45 minutes once the bark sets, or serve it warm in small cups alongside sliced brisket for dunking.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The Kitchen Oven Workaround.**

If you live in an apartment and are smoking your brisket indoors on a wire rack at 275°F, add 2 tablespoons of high-quality liquid smoke directly to this mop. Basting it onto the meat will bake the smoke into the bark, yielding a surprisingly authentic, uncompromising flavor.

● **Respecting the Stall.**

When your meat hits 150°F to 160°F, it will stall. Mopping adds liquid to the surface and prolongs this stall through evaporative cooling. This is a good thing; it gives the tough collagen more time to break down into lush gelatin before you finally wrap the meat in butcher paper to push it to a probe-tender 203°F.



## Alabama White Sauce

Alabama white sauce is the great, quiet outlier of American barbecue. Born in 1925 when a massive railroad worker named Big Bob Gibson needed a way to keep his hickory-smoked chickens from drying out over the pit. He bypassed tomatoes and molasses entirely, devising a radical, sharp, peppery mayonnaise-based concoction. The magic happens in what his pitmasters called the 'baptism'—you plunge a hot, freshly smoked bird directly into a vat of the stuff. The fat melts into the porous skin, the harsh vinegar burns off, and you're left with a tangy glaze that cuts perfectly through heavy wood smoke.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>2 cup</b>	mayonnaise <i>high-quality (like Duke's or Hellmann's)</i>	<b>2 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly cracked</i>
<b>1 cup</b>	distilled white vinegar	<b>2 tsp</b>	fresh lemon juice
<b>1/2 cup</b>	apple juice	<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>2 tsp</b>	prepared horseradish	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	cayenne pepper

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Combine all ingredients in a large, non-reactive mixing bowl.**  
Whisk vigorously until completely smooth. The liquid will be surprisingly thin and milky white with heavy flecks of pepper—more like a mop sauce than a thick condiment.
- 2. Transfer the sauce to an airtight jar and refrigerate for a minimum of two hours.**  
This resting period is non-negotiable. It allows the dehydrated cayenne and black pepper to bloom and the volatile compounds in the horseradish to meld with the lipid fats. Twenty-four hours is even better.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **The Baptism.**  
Never brush this sauce onto raw chicken, or the mayonnaise will break and burn. Once your bird reaches 165°F internal, pull it off the heat and immediately submerge the hot halves entirely into a vat of the white sauce.
- **The Smoker Setup.**  
Poultry absorbs smoke rapidly and its skin turns rubbery at low temperatures. Set your kamado or pellet smoker to 325°F and use mild applewood, which perfectly complements the sharp white sauce.

- **Kettle and Oven Workarounds.**

On a basic charcoal kettle, use the snake method with applewood chunks to maintain a steady 325°F. If you're cooking indoors, roast the chicken in a 300°F oven with a foil smoke bomb, and add a half-teaspoon of natural liquid hickory smoke directly to your sauce mixture. Honesty is the best policy.



## Austin-Style Espresso & Ancho Finishing Sauce

In Central Texas, purists will tell you that a perfectly smoked brisket needs no sauce. They aren't wrong, but the modern Austin pitmaster knows that a thin, highly acidic, profoundly savory glaze doesn't mask the meat—it elevates it. This finishing sauce marries the city's third-wave coffee obsession with traditional Tejano heat, utilizing sharp vinegars to cut through rich rendered fat, pure ancho chile for an earthy sweetness, and a crucial hit of smoked beef tallow so the condiment tastes like an organic extension of the barbecue itself. It is uncompromising, deeply mahogany, and entirely achievable in your backyard.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	ketchup	<b>2 tbsp</b>	pure ancho chile powder
<b>1/2 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar	<b>1 tbsp</b>	granulated garlic
<b>1/2 cup</b>	distilled white vinegar	<b>1 tbsp</b>	granulated onion
<b>1/4 cup</b>	dark brown sugar	<b>3 tbsp</b>	dark-roast espresso <i>freshly pulled</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	dark soy sauce	<b>2 tbsp</b>	smoked beef tallow

## PREPARATION

- **Prepare your espresso substitute if you lack an espresso machine.**  
Mix 3 tablespoons of hot water with 1 tablespoon of premium instant espresso powder right before you need to add it to the sauce.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Lightly toast the ancho chile powder, granulated garlic, and granulated onion in a dry, heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat for 45 seconds.**  
This blooms the spices and mimics the traditional Tejano technique of toasting dried chiles on a comal, unlocking their deep, earthy fragrance.
- 2. Remove the pan from the heat briefly and whisk in the ketchup, apple cider vinegar, distilled white vinegar, dark brown sugar, and dark soy sauce.**  
Return to medium heat and bring to a gentle simmer, whisking constantly until the sugar dissolves. Reduce heat to medium-low and let it simmer for 15 to 20 minutes until it becomes a deep, glossy glaze.
- 3. Remove the saucepan entirely from the heat and whisk in the freshly pulled espresso.**  
Never add the coffee while the sauce is boiling; the residual heat is enough to marry the oils without scorching them or extracting bitter tannins.

- 1. Aggressively whisk the smoked beef tallow into the hot sauce until completely emulsified.**

This creates a velvety texture and grounds the condiment in authentic barbecue flavor. Allow to cool to room temperature before transferring to a squeeze bottle or glass jar.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Standardize your kitchen equipment workarounds if you lack an offset stick burner.**

Use the snake method in a standard kettle grill to hold a clean 250°F. If you are confined to a kitchen oven, roast the meat at a steady 300°F using a foil pouch of soaked wood chips on the oven floor for smoke, and don't be ashamed to add a few dashes of high-quality liquid smoke to this sauce to bridge the gap.

- **Apply this sauce strategically depending on the regional meat you are smoking.**

For a Texas brisket smoked over post oak to 203°F (pushed through the stall with pink butcher paper, rested in a faux Cambro, and sliced across the grain), serve this sauce warm on the side. For Memphis-style ribs cooked over hickory, paint the sauce on during the final 15 minutes of the cook so the sugars caramelize into a sticky bark.





## Chapter 2 — The Meats

*The unapologetic heavyweights of the American smokehouse, adapted for the backyard pitmaster.*

The meat is the altar. It's the grease-stained butcher paper, the smoke-blinded eyes at dawn, the bark-heavy burnt ends snatched from a scarred cutting board before they ever see a tray. Whether you're wrangling a temperamental offset smoker or coaxing magic out of a rusted Weber kettle, this is the brutal, beautiful alchemy of rendering tough muscle into something transcendent.

Here are the heavyweights of the American smokehouse: peppery Texas briskets, dry-rubbed Memphis ribs, and the defiant snap of genuine hot guts. There are no shortcuts here. Just time, fire, and a profound, lingering respect for the animal.





## The Kansas City Z-Man Sandwich

A gas station at the corner of 47th and Mission in Kansas City birthed a masterpiece of American barbecue engineering. It is a structurally unsound, profoundly beautiful collision of hickory-smoked brisket, melted provolone, crispy onion rings, and sweet, sticky sauce piled high on a Kaiser roll. You do not need a competition-grade rig to pull this off; you just need patience, respect for the meat, and the willingness to let whatever equipment you have do the heavy lifting to achieve that undeniable, probe-tender perfection.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>5 to 6 lb</b>	beef brisket flat <i>trimmed to 1/4-inch fat cap and silver skin removed</i>	<b>1/2 cup</b>	beef broth
<b>2 tbsp</b>	dark brown sugar	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	liquid smoke <i>if using the oven method</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	sweet paprika	<b>8 large</b>	Kaiser rolls
<b>1 tbsp</b>	chili powder	<b>3 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter <i>melted</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	freshly ground black pepper	<b>8 slices</b>	smoked provolone cheese
<b>1 tbsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>16 med</b>	onion rings <i>cooked hot and crispy</i>
<b>1 tsp</b>	dry mustard	<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	Kansas City-style barbecue sauce
<b>1 tsp</b>	granulated garlic		
<b>1 tsp</b>	onion powder		

## PREPARATION

- **Mix the Kansas City rub.**

Combine the dark brown sugar, sweet paprika, chili powder, black pepper, kosher salt, dry mustard, granulated garlic, and onion powder in a bowl.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Trim the flat and apply the rub aggressively.**

Press the spice mix into every square inch of the meat so it sticks, then let it sit at room temperature while you fire up your equipment.

- 2. Set up your smoker with hickory wood to maintain a steady 250 degrees.**

If using a kamado or pellet grill, dial in your temperature and add hickory wood chunks or pellets, as hickory is the absolute standard for authentic Kansas City flavor.

- 1. Smoke the brisket undisturbed until a dark mahogany bark sets.**  
Place the meat fat-side up. Let the smoke do its work for the first three hours, spritzing lightly with beef broth only if the edges begin to look dry and desiccated.
- 2. Wrap the meat tightly in unwaxed pink butcher paper to push through the stall.**  
Around the five-hour mark, evaporative cooling will halt the temperature rise at about 160 degrees; wrap the brisket to protect the bark and return it to the heat.
- 3. Continue cooking until the brisket hits an internal temperature of exactly 203 degrees.**  
Do not cook by the clock here; insert your thermometer probe into the thickest part of the flat and look for zero resistance, like sliding hot metal into warm peanut butter.
- 4. Rest the brisket in a faux Cambro for at least one hour.**  
Stash the wrapped meat inside an insulated cooler stuffed with old towels so the muscle fibers relax and the gelatinous juices redistribute perfectly.
- 5. Slice the rested brisket paper-thin across the grain.**  
Using a sharp carving knife, cut the meat deli-style to yield the delicate, melt-in-your-mouth texture required for this specific sandwich construct.
- 6. Build the sandwich with toasted buns, hot meat, melting cheese, and crispy onion rings.**  
Brush the rolls with melted butter and toast them, then layer sauce, three to four ounces of hot brisket, a slice of smoked provolone, two hot onion rings, a heavy drizzle of sauce, and the crown.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **The Charcoal Kettle Snake Method.**

If you are working with a basic charcoal kettle, arrange unlit briquettes in a semi-circle along the perimeter of the grate and layer hickory chunks over the first half. Light the very head of the snake and adjust vents to hold 250 degrees for hours of clean smoke.

- **The Kitchen Oven Workaround.**

For apartment dwellers, honest barbecue is still achievable. Inject the brisket with the beef broth mixed with liquid smoke to mimic deep wood penetration. Bake the flat on a wire rack at 300 degrees, wrapping it in paper once the crust sets after four hours.



## Memphis Smoked Bologna Sandwich with Mustard Slaw

Let's get something straight right out of the gate: smoked bologna is not a joke. If you have ever stood in a gravel parking lot breathing in the blue smoke of a cinderblock pit, you know the "Oklahoma Prime Rib" commands respect. You take a cheap, mass-produced emulsified sausage, score it, coat it in a spicy Memphis rub, and subject it to three hours of hickory smoke until the edges crisp into a mahogany bark. But the sandwich isn't complete without the slaw—a neon-yellow, aggressively acidic mustard punch to the jaw that cuts perfectly through the rich, fatty meat. Serve it on a squishy commercial bun and don't look back.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>3 lb</b>	bologna chub <i>unsliced, casing removed</i>	<b>1 med</b>	green cabbage <i>cored and finely chopped</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	yellow mustard	<b>1/3 cup</b>	yellow mustard
<b>3 tbsp</b>	sweet paprika	<b>1/4 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar
<b>2 tbsp</b>	dark brown sugar	<b>1/4 cup</b>	white sugar
<b>1 tbsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>2 tbsp</b>	mayonnaise
<b>1 tbsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	dry mustard powder
<b>2 tsp</b>	garlic powder	<b>1 tsp</b>	celery seed
<b>2 tsp</b>	onion powder	<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1 tsp</b>	dry mustard powder	<b>1 tsp</b>	black pepper
<b>1 tsp</b>	celery seed	<b>1 cup</b>	Memphis-style BBQ sauce
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	cayenne pepper	<b>6 large</b>	white hamburger buns

## PREPARATION

- **Use the snake method for standard charcoal kettles.**  
Stack unlit charcoal briquettes two-wide and two-deep in a semi-circle along the edge of the kettle, top with hickory chunks, and ignite one end with eight lit briquettes to deliver a steady 250 degrees Fahrenheit.
- **The kitchen oven workaround uses liquid smoke and a cast-iron finish.**  
Mix 1 tablespoon of hickory liquid smoke into your mustard binder, roast on a wire rack at 300 degrees Fahrenheit for 90 minutes, glaze, then sear the thick slices in a hot cast-iron skillet to fake the char before assembling.

## INSTRUCTIONS

**1. Prepare the mustard slaw at least two hours ahead of time.**

Whisk the yellow mustard, apple cider vinegar, sugar, mayonnaise, dry mustard powder, celery seed, salt, and pepper until the sugar dissolves, then toss with the chopped cabbage and refrigerate.

**2. Score the outside of the bologna in a diamond pattern.**

Using a sharp knife, make cuts about 1/2-inch deep and 1-inch apart, spanning the entire length and circumference of the chub.

**3. Slather the bologna with yellow mustard and pack on the dry rub.**

The mustard acts purely as a binder; mix the paprika, brown sugar, salt, black pepper, garlic powder, onion powder, dry mustard, celery seed, and cayenne, and press it firmly into the score lines.

**4. Prepare your smoker for indirect cooking at 250 degrees Fahrenheit.**

Toss a few chunks of hickory or pecan wood onto the coals to get a clean blue smoke going.

**5. Smoke the bologna for two to two and a half hours.**

The score marks will expand deeply to expose the interior to the smoke while the exterior turns a dark mahogany.

**6. Mop the exterior heavily with BBQ sauce during the final thirty minutes of the cook.**

Wait until the internal temperature hits 160 degrees Fahrenheit, then glaze the meat, close the lid, and let the sugars in the sauce tack up and caramelize.

**7. Let the chub rest loosely tented for twenty minutes before slicing.**

This allows the sticky glaze to set up properly before you cut it into thick 1/2-inch to 3/4-inch slices.

## 1. **Build the sandwich on a squishy white bun.**

Pile a thick slice of smoked bologna on the bottom bun, drizzle with extra BBQ sauce, heap a massive spoonful of mustard slaw right on top of the meat, and cap it.

### CHEF'S NOTES

- **The target internal temperature is 160 degrees Fahrenheit.**

Unlike brisket or pork shoulder, bologna is precooked; your only goal here is to render the interior fat slightly and caramelize the exterior sugars without burning them.

- **Hickory is the absolute standard, but pecan is an excellent substitute.**

Because scored bologna is highly porous, it can easily over-smoke. The milder, nutty profile of pecan is perfect for avoiding a bitter, acrid bark.

- **Bologna does not experience a stall.**

Because it is highly processed and lacks raw muscle fibers and high water content, wrapping in butcher paper or foil is unnecessary and will ruin your carefully crafted bark.

- **A twenty minute rest is all you need.**

While raw meats require extensive resting in a faux-Cambro to reabsorb juices, bologna just needs a brief moment for the exterior glaze to cool and set.



## Central Texas 'Hot Guts' & Crackers Board

It started as a butcher's trick to stretch meat before the rot set in, and it evolved into the holy trinity of Texas barbecue. This is 'Hot Guts': a fiercely beefy, black-pepper-punched sausage packed into natural hog casings that snaps back aggressively when you bite it. We are chasing the ghosts of 19th-century Lockhart meat markets here, which means precise temperatures, uncompromising seasoning, and an honest respect for whatever equipment you have—whether that's a rusted offset stick burner, a backyard kettle grill, or a standard kitchen oven. Serve it on butcher paper with cheap saltines, raw white onion, and a thin shot of pickle juice. No pretensions. Just perfect execution.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>3 1/4 lb</b>	beef chuck roast <i>cut into 1-inch cubes</i>	<b>1/2 cup</b>	dry milk powder
<b>3/4 lb</b>	boneless pork butt <i>cut into 1-inch cubes</i>	<b>1/2 cup</b>	domestic beer <i>ice-cold</i>
<b>2 1/2 tbsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>10 feet</b>	natural hog casings <i>rinsed thoroughly and soaked in warm water overnight</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	coarse black pepper	<b>1 large sleeve</b>	saltine crackers
<b>1 tbsp</b>	whole black peppercorns <i>lightly smashed</i>	<b>1 med</b>	white onion <i>thinly sliced</i>
<b>2 tsp</b>	cayenne pepper	<b>1 cup</b>	dill pickle chips
<b>1 tbsp</b>	smoked paprika	<b>1/2 cup</b>	dill pickle brine
<b>1 tbsp</b>	garlic powder	<b>1/4 cup</b>	distilled white vinegar
<b>1 tsp</b>	mustard powder	<b>1 tbsp</b>	hot sauce
<b>1 tsp</b>	pink curing salt		

## PREPARATION

- **Place your meat grinder attachments and a large mixing bowl in the freezer for at least one hour before beginning.**

Temperature control is the cardinal rule of sausage making; if the fat melts before it hits the smoker, the emulsion will break.

- **Whisk together the pickle brine, vinegar, hot sauce, and a pinch of cayenne to make the serving sauce.**

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Freeze the cubed beef and pork on a rimmed baking sheet for 45 to 60 minutes until crusty and firm but not fully frozen.**
- 2. Run the semi-frozen meat through the coarse plate of your meat grinder.**  
Alternate pieces of beef and pork to ensure an even distribution of the fat.

- 1. Aggressively mix the ground meat, dry spices, and ice-cold beer together for three to five minutes.**

The mixture is ready when it becomes highly sticky and a handful adheres to your palm when turned upside down.

- 2. Fry a small patty of the raw mixture in a skillet to check the seasoning.**  
Adjust the salt and heat to your preference before you commit to stuffing.

- 3. Load the tacky meat mixture into a sausage stuffer and fill the soaked hog casings.**

Crank slowly and leave a little slack; do not stretch them to the point of bursting.

- 4. Pinch the coil every six to eight inches and twist gently in alternating directions to form individual links.**

Prick any trapped air bubbles with a sanitized needle, then refrigerate the links uncovered on a wire rack overnight to dry the exterior into a tacky pellicle.

- 5. Smoke the sausages using Texas post oak at 150°F, gradually increasing the ambient heat to 225°F.**

For an offset or kamado, maintain thin blue smoke. For a kettle grill, build a charcoal snake with unlit briquettes and oak chunks. For an oven workaround, bake at 250°F—having added 1 1/2 teaspoons of liquid smoke to the meat mix—until up to temp, then broil 60 seconds per side.

- 6. Pull the sausages the exact moment an instant-read thermometer registers an internal temperature of 160°F.**

Sausage does not experience a traditional stall; cooking past 160°F will violently boil the fat and burst the casings.

- 7. Plunge the finished sausages immediately into an ice-water bath for five to ten minutes.**

This aggressively halts the cooking process, trapping the fat and shrinking the casing tightly against the meat to ensure a massive snap.

- 8. Let the sausages sit at room temperature for one to two hours to bloom into a deep mahogany color.**

Reheat gently before serving.

**1. Serve utilitarian-style on butcher paper.**

Slice into bite-sized hot rounds and eat on saltine crackers layered with raw onion, pickle chips, and a dash of pickle-juice hot sauce.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Equipment Equity**

Not everyone owns a 1,000-gallon reverse-flow stick burner. Your first home-smoked sausage should elicit the reaction, 'YES, THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT FRANKLIN TASTES LIKE,' regardless of equipment. Use the kettle 'snake method' or the oven workaround detailed in the steps without shame.

● **Wood Selection**

Texas brisket and beef sausage require post oak. Don't substitute applewood or hickory if you want the genuine Lockhart profile.



## Cozy Corner-Inspired Barbecued Cornish Hen

In the undisputed pork capital of the world, tucked inside a cinderblock joint on North Parkway, the Robinson family at Cozy Corner achieved absolute perfection with a diminutive, spread-eagle chicken. Smoked in a 1970s Chicago-style aquarium pit, their Cornish game hen emerges burnished, mahogany-skinned, and swimming in a puddle of fiery Memphis sauce. It is an uncompromising masterpiece of regional barbecue. This recipe brings Desiree Robinson's exacting magic to the backyard, bypassing the need for a custom pit with smart thermal management and a dead-simple dry rub that you sprinkle, never rub.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>2 med</b>	Cornish game hens <i>spatchcocked and patted completely dry</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	onion powder
<b>1 tbsp</b>	olive oil	<b>1 tsp</b>	cayenne pepper
<b>1/4 cup</b>	sweet paprika	<b>1 cup</b>	ketchup
<b>2 tbsp</b>	dark brown sugar	<b>1/2 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar
<b>1 1/2 tbsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1/4 cup</b>	water
<b>1 tbsp</b>	chili powder	<b>2 tbsp</b>	dark brown sugar
<b>1 tbsp</b>	coarse black pepper	<b>1 tbsp</b>	yellow mustard
<b>1 tbsp</b>	garlic powder	<b>1 tbsp</b>	Worcestershire sauce
		<b>1 tsp</b>	hot sauce

## PREPARATION

- **Spatchcock and dry brine the hens overnight.**

Split the birds down the back with poultry shears, crack the breastbone flat, and pat completely dry. Mix your dry rub (reserving one teaspoon for the sauce later), coat the birds with a microscopic sheen of olive oil, and sprinkle the spices on from up high. Do not rub or massage it in. Leave uncovered in the fridge overnight to desiccate the skin.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Set your smoker, kettle, or oven to 275°F.**

For a proper smoker, run indirect heat with hickory and a little applewood. For a kettle, build a charcoal snake and lay wood chunks along the first half. If confined indoors, set your oven to 300°F and mix a quarter-teaspoon of liquid hickory smoke into your binder oil before applying the rub.

**1. Smoke the birds naked, refusing the urge to wrap them.**

Place the spatchcocked hens directly on the grill grates, bone-side down. Placing foil or butcher paper over poultry traps steam and ruins the epidermal texture. Let the clean, thin blue smoke do the work.

**2. Simmer the thin Memphis sauce.**

While the birds smoke, whisk the ketchup, vinegar, water, the remaining 2 tablespoons of brown sugar, mustard, Worcestershire, hot sauce, and your reserved teaspoon of dry rub in a saucepan over medium heat. Let it simmer for 10 minutes. It should be thin enough to pool beneath the meat, not paint it.

**3. Pull the hens at 165°F and rest them loosely tented.**

After about an hour and fifteen minutes, check the thickest part of the breast. The thigh should register 175°F and the leg joint should twist freely. Remove from the heat, tent very loosely with foil so steam escapes, and rest for 15 minutes. A faux Cambro cooler is unnecessary here; the thermal mass is too small and the steam would destroy the skin.

**4. Serve drenched over cheap white bread.**

Slice the hen down the breastbone. Lay it on a piece of white bread and ladle the warm barbecue sauce directly over the top, letting it soak the bread and pool on the plate.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Barbecued Bologna.**

For the full Cozy Corner experience, score a thick, two-inch slab of commercial bologna, dust it heavily with the house dry rub, and smoke it alongside the hens.



## Rendezvous-Style Direct Heat Pork Riblets

If Central Texas brisket is high gospel, Charlie Vergos's Rendezvous is the punk-rock underground of Memphis barbecue. Since 1948, this basement joint has ignored every rule of Southern low-and-slow smoking, cooking ribs hot and fast over direct charcoal with zero wood, no stall, and no sweet glaze. The flavor comes entirely from pork fat vaporizing on glowing coals, finished with a heavy, savory Greek-inspired rub of oregano, garlic, and celery seed. This method adapts that legendary 18-inch-gap basement technique for a backyard kettle or kitchen oven, yielding ribs that are tender, firm, and uncompromisingly authentic.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>4 lb</b>	pork baby back ribs <i>split lengthwise across the bones into riblets</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	celery seed <i>crushed</i>
<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>4 tsp</b>	whole yellow mustard seed
<b>8 tbsp</b>	sweet American paprika	<b>1 tbsp</b>	dried Greek oregano
<b>4 tbsp</b>	garlic powder	<b>1 tbsp</b>	dried thyme
<b>4 tbsp</b>	mild chili powder	<b>4 tsp</b>	whole allspice berries <i>crushed</i>
<b>3 tbsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1 tsp</b>	ground coriander
<b>3 tbsp</b>	black pepper <i>coarsely ground</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	distilled white vinegar
<b>2 tbsp</b>	whole celery seed	<b>1 cup</b>	water
		<b>1/4 cup</b>	ketchup

## PREPARATION

- **Remove the silverskin membrane from the back of the ribs using a butter knife and a paper towel for grip.**

While Rendezvous traditionally leaves the membrane on to protect the meat from intense heat, removing it allows our home-kitchen mop to penetrate deeper.

- **Lightly salt the ribs and let them rest in the fridge for two to four hours.**  
This dry brine acts as an osmotic pump, pulling seasoning deep into the pork.
- **Whisk together the paprika, garlic powder, chili powder, three tablespoons of salt, black pepper, celery seeds, mustard seed, oregano, thyme, allspice, and coriander to create the Greek-Memphis rub.**

Make a large batch, as it keeps for months in an airtight container.

- **Combine the vinegar, water, ketchup, and three tablespoons of the dry rub to create the mop.**

Do not apply the remaining dry rub to the raw meat yet, as the raw spices will burn over direct heat.

## INSTRUCTIONS

**1. Configure your grill for a high-heat, two-zone fire.**

Bank a full chimney of lit hardwood charcoal to one side of a kettle grill to achieve a steady dome temperature of 325°F to 350°F.

**2. Place the ribs on the indirect side of the grill and paint them heavily with the vinegar mop.**

Close the lid and completely bypass the stall phase; there is no foil wrap here, so leave the meat naked to absorb the charcoal vapor.

**3. Flip and baste the ribs aggressively with the mop every fifteen minutes.**

Right after mopping, briefly hold the ribs directly over the hot coals for about sixty seconds, letting the mop and rendering fat drip onto the fire to create a white smoke that washes the meat in complex flavor.

**4. Check for a 195°F internal temperature and the signature bend.**

After 60 to 75 minutes, the meat should shrink back from the bones, and when picked up from the center with tongs, both ends should droop down into an inverted U-shape.

**5. Rest the meat briefly before executing the final mop and dusting.**

Remove the ribs to a cutting board, apply one final heavy coat of the mop while they are still blisteringly hot, and immediately shower them generously with the dry rub. A 15-minute rest is sufficient, though an hour in an insulated cooler will make them even more tender.

## CHEF'S NOTES

● **For honest indoor barbecue, utilize a kitchen oven and a touch of liquid smoke.**

Add 1/2 teaspoon of high-quality liquid smoke to the vinegar mop, bake the ribs on a wire rack set inside a rimmed baking sheet at 350°F for 75 minutes while mopping every 15 minutes, and flash them under the broiler for 2 to 4 minutes at the end to simulate the char.

- **Authentic Rendezvous ribs require absolutely zero wood smoke.**

Use 100% hardwood lump charcoal. If you are desperate for wood smoke, a single chunk of hickory or pecan is acceptable, but it strays from the Memphis basement gospel.

- **Bypass the stall completely and never wrap the meat.**

Because we are cooking at a blistering 350°F, we completely bypass the evaporative cooling phase known as the stall. Do not wrap these ribs in foil.



# Memphis Barbecue Spaghetti

It sounds like a drunken diner's midnight hallucination: Italian-American immigrant starch colliding head-on with a thermodynamic miracle of Southern smoked pork. But when executed with uncompromising technique, Memphis Barbecue Spaghetti is a revelation. Invented by a mid-century railroad cook and preserved by legendary Bluff City pitmasters, this dish demands patience, a tolerance for the meat stall, and the wisdom to know that true barbecue is simmered directly into the sauce. Whether you are running a custom offset stick burner or faking it with a kettle grill, the secret lies in the long, naked pecan smoke of the pork shoulder.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>6 lb</b>	bone-in pork shoulder <i>fat cap trimmed to 1/4 inch</i>	<b>3 med</b>	garlic clove <i>minced</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	yellow mustard	<b>28 oz</b>	tomato sauce
<b>1/2 cup</b>	Memphis dry rub	<b>2 cup</b>	Memphis-style barbecue sauce
<b>1 qt</b>	pecan wood chunks		
<b>2 tbsp</b>	neutral oil	<b>1/4 cup</b>	water
<b>1 large</b>	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	liquid smoke
<b>1 large</b>	green bell pepper <i>finely diced</i>	<b>1 lb</b>	dried spaghetti

## PREPARATION

- **The Oven Workaround.**

If you are strictly cooking indoors, set your oven to 300°F. Rub the meat with the liquid smoke before applying the dry rub, and cook on a wire rack set over a foil-lined baking sheet. Simmer the sauce on your stovetop over low heat.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Prepare the shoulder.**

Apply a thin layer of yellow mustard to act as a binder, then generously coat the entire pork shoulder with the Memphis dry rub, pressing the spices firmly into the meat. Let it rest at room temperature for 45 minutes.

- 2. Fire the pit.**

Configure your smoker, kamado, or kettle grill to maintain a steady ambient temperature of 250°F, utilizing the pecan wood for its sweet, nutty smoke profile.

**1. Smoke the meat naked.**

Place the pork directly on the grates, fat side up. Do not wrap it when the meat inevitably stalls around 160°F; push through the evaporative cooling to build a deeply dark, crusty bark.

**2. Push for the target temperature.**

Continue smoking uninterrupted until the thickest part of the shoulder hits 190°F to 195°F on an instant-read thermometer.

**3. Rest and pull.**

Remove the pork, wrap it tightly in foil and a towel, and rest it in an insulated cooler for at least one hour. Discard the blade bone and pull the meat into long strands, reserving one cup of the fattiest pieces and finely chopping them for the sauce.

**4. Sweat the aromatics.**

Heat the oil in a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium heat, sautéing the diced onion and bell pepper until deeply softened, about 8 to 10 minutes. Stir in the garlic and the reserved cup of chopped fatty pork, rendering the fat for an additional 3 minutes.

**5. Infuse the sauce.**

Pour the tomato sauce, barbecue sauce, and water into the pot, stirring thoroughly to create a unified emulsion. Move the uncovered Dutch oven into your 250°F smoker for 45 to 60 minutes, allowing the surface to absorb the ambient wood smoke.

**6. Boil the pasta.**

Bring a large pot of heavily salted water to a rolling boil and cook the spaghetti strictly until al dente. Drain the noodles, retaining half a cup of the starchy pasta water.

## 1. **Unify the dish.**

Return the drained pasta to the large pot over medium-low heat, pouring the hot, smoky sauce base directly over the noodles along with two cups of the pulled pork. Toss vigorously with tongs for 4 to 5 minutes until every strand is coated, splashing in pasta water if needed to achieve a glossy finish.

### CHEF'S NOTES

- **The Faux Cambro.**

You must rest this meat for an hour minimum. Wrapping the hot shoulder in foil, then a clean towel, and dropping it into an insulated cooler keeps the pork safely hot and lets the superheated gelatin redistribute.

- **The Kettle Snake Method.**

Don't have an offset smoker? Arrange unlit briquettes in a semi-circle along the outer edge of your charcoal kettle, place pecan chunks on the first half, and light one end to deliver consistent, low indirect heat for hours.

- **The Pull, Never Chop.**

Unlike brisket or whole-hog, Memphis shoulder for this specific dish must be pulled. Preserving those long muscle fibers mimics the pasta, integrating texturally with the spaghetti.



## Alabama White Sauce High-Heat Chicken Halves

If Texas brisket is the king of beef, Northern Alabama claims the undisputed crown for poultry. Born in the rail-town of Decatur in 1925, Big Bob Gibson realized that three hours over hickory smoke dried a chicken out, so he engineered a revolutionary fix: a tangy, peppery, mayonnaise-based sauce. The fat in the mayo acts as a barrier, keeping the meat incredibly juicy while the vinegar and horseradish cut straight through the rich wood smoke. This requires abandoning everything you know about thick, sweet barbecue sauces. You aren't going to brush this on; you are going to plunge the entire hot bird into it. When that blistered chicken hits the cold sauce, the residual heat sets

the mayo into a shimmering, tangy glaze. It is a quiet, regional gem, and that first bite of applewood smoke, rendered fat, and sharp horseradish will make a true believer out of anyone.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>2 cup</b>	Duke's Mayonnaise	<b>2 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1 cup</b>	distilled white vinegar	<b>1 tbsp</b>	granulated sugar
<b>1/2 cup</b>	apple juice	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	cayenne pepper
<b>2 tsp</b>	prepared horseradish	<b>2 large</b>	whole young chickens <i>split in half and patted dry</i>
<b>2 tsp</b>	coarsely ground black pepper	<b>1/4 cup</b>	neutral oil
<b>2 tsp</b>	fresh lemon juice	<b>1/4 cup</b>	savory BBQ rub

## PREPARATION

- **Mix the Alabama White Sauce.**

Whisk the mayonnaise, vinegar, apple juice, horseradish, black pepper, lemon juice, salt, sugar, and cayenne together in a large, wide bowl until smooth, then refrigerate for at least an hour to marry the flavors and chill the emulsion.

- **Split the chickens.**

Using heavy poultry shears, cut completely through the backbone. Flip the birds over and slice directly down the center of the breastbone to yield four distinct halves, which are much easier to manage on a home grill.

- **Season the halves.**

Pat the chicken halves completely dry with paper towels to ensure crispy skin. Coat them lightly with the neutral oil as a binder, and generously apply your BBQ rub to both sides, getting some underneath the skin where possible.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. **Fire up the pit for a high-heat smoke.**

Dial your kamado, offset, or pellet smoker in to 325°F using indirect heat, and add two or three chunks of applewood or hickory. For a standard kettle, set up a two-zone fire or a short unlit charcoal snake to maintain 325°F. For the kitchen oven workaround, preheat to 325°F and add a half-teaspoon of liquid smoke to the oil binder on the chicken before placing it on a wire rack over a foil-lined baking sheet.

### 2. **Smoke the chicken halves undisturbed.**

Place the chicken halves in the indirect heat zone, skin-side up. Let them ride for about 45 minutes to set the skin and absorb the smoke. Unlike brisket or pork shoulder, there is no evaporative stall with poultry at this temperature; the heat will power straight through.

### 3. **Render the fat and check the temperature.**

Once the skin turns a deep mahogany, you may optionally flip them skin-side down for 15 minutes to aggressively render the fat, watching closely for flare-ups. Pull the chicken the second the thickest part of the breast hits 165°F and the thickest part of the thigh registers exactly 180°F, ensuring the dark meat is fully tenderized.

### 4. **Dunk the hot chicken into the cold sauce.**

Using heavy tongs, take a freshly smoked chicken half and completely submerge it into the large bowl of chilled white sauce. If your bowl isn't deep enough, roll the bird around or aggressively baste it with a ladle until absolutely every inch is baptized.

### 5. **Rest the chicken to set the glaze.**

Transfer the dunked chicken to a wire rack or cutting board and let it rest for 10 to 15 minutes. The residual heat of the chicken will gently cook the mayonnaise, turning the opaque white liquid into a translucent, shimmering glaze that locks in the juices.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **Don't fear the oven broiler.**

If cooking indoors or if the skin hasn't crisped properly by the time the thigh hits 180°F, blast the chicken halves under the oven broiler for three to five minutes before dunking, watching constantly to prevent burning.

- **Serve with the classics.**

Slice the rested halves into quarters, separating the breast from the leg, and serve with a stack of white bread, pickles, and the leftover white sauce on the side for dipping.





## Chapter 3 — The Sides

*The quintessential traditional side dishes that balance the rich, smoky flavors of barbecue.*

You can judge a barbecue joint not just by the bark on its brisket, but by what sits in the little paper boats next to it. The meat is the sermon, sure, but the sides are the choir. They provide the essential counterpunch to a staggering wave of animal fat and wood smoke—sharp vinegar slaws that bite back, collards braised into dark, funky submission with pork hocks, and baked mac and cheese crusted over like it actually means business.

There is no room here for sad, store-bought deli filler. These are the unsung, starch-heavy anchors and acidic palate cleansers that keep you going back for another hit of pork. From the holy Texas trinity of cheap white bread, raw onion,

and pickles, to a Southern skillet cornbread baked strictly without sugar, this is the supporting cast that makes the whole glorious, messy plate make sense.





## Piedmont-Style "Red Slaw"

Down in the North Carolina Piedmont, coleslaw is not the sad, mayonnaise-drowned afterthought of the coastal east. Born in the sweltering 1920s barbecue tents of Lexington, this local fixture relies on the exact same ketchup-tinged vinegar dip used to baste the pork. It is a vital structural component of the sandwich, not a side dish to be eaten in isolation. The biting acidity cuts through the rich, rendered fat of smoked pork shoulder, the ketchup bridges the meat and the bread, and an aggressive pre-salting technique guarantees a crunch that will not quit. No mayonnaise, no carrots, just pure, uncompromised Carolina heritage.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 med</b>	green cabbage <i>cored and finely chopped, not shredded</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	granulated sugar
<b>1 tbsp</b>	Kosher salt	<b>1 tbsp</b>	Texas Pete hot sauce
<b>1 tbsp</b>	granulated sugar	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	crushed red pepper flakes
<b>1/2 cup</b>	ketchup	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	Kosher salt

## PREPARATION

- **Finely chop the green cabbage into pieces roughly the size of small peas.**

Do not shred the cabbage into long ribbons; the texture must be uniform to easily mix with the pulled pork on a bun without dragging out in messy strands.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Toss the chopped cabbage with one tablespoon of salt and one tablespoon of sugar in a large colander.**

Let it sit over a bowl or sink at room temperature for one to two hours to draw out the excess cellular water—this osmotic drain is the non-negotiable secret to a slaw that stays crunchy instead of weeping into a sad, watery puddle.

- 2. Rinse the cabbage thoroughly under cold running water to strip away the surface salt.**

Transfer it to a salad spinner and spin it dry, or lay it out on paper towels and pat it aggressively until completely devoid of surface moisture, then move to a large mixing bowl.

- 3. Whisk the apple cider vinegar, ketchup, the remaining quarter cup of sugar, hot sauce, black pepper, red pepper flakes, and the remaining half teaspoon of salt.**

Keep whisking until the sugar granules have completely dissolved into a thin, red Lexington dip.

**1. Pour the dressing over the dried cabbage and toss thoroughly to coat.**

Cover the bowl tightly and refrigerate for a minimum of three to four hours, or ideally overnight, allowing the acetic acid to properly penetrate the cabbage matrix.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

- **Serve this slaw piled high on a cheap white bun over pecan-smoked pork shoulder.**

Western Carolina barbecue demands pork shoulder, pulled (not chopped, for optimal home texture), after hitting a probe-tender 190-195°F. Leave the shoulder naked through the stall to build a rugged bark that contrasts the slaw's acidity, and let it rest at least an hour in a faux-Cambro cooler before pulling.

- **Replicate the Piedmont smokehouse without a stick-burner.**

If you're on a kettle grill, use the snake method with unlit briquettes and pecan wood chunks to hold 225-250°F all day. If you're apartment-bound, roast the shoulder in a 300°F oven, employing a foil-wrapped wood chip smoke bomb and an honest, sparing dash of high-quality liquid smoke.



# Eastern Carolina Golden Hush Puppies

There is no Eastern Carolina whole-hog barbecue without a basket of golden, onion-laced hush puppies. While the coast drops them into little round balls to eat with fried flounder, the old-school inland stick-burner joints pipe them into logs or fingers. This shape isn't just for looks; it maximizes the crispy surface area, ensuring the crunch holds up even when you use the hush puppy to sop up the peppery vinegar left on your plate. Uncompromising on flavor, this batter relies on the tang of real buttermilk and the savory depth of rendered bacon fat, fried hot in a cast-iron Dutch oven on your kitchen stove—or better yet, outside on your kettle grill while the pork rests.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	yellow cornmeal <i>fine or medium stone-ground</i>	<b>1/4 tsp</b>	cayenne pepper
<b>3/4 cup</b>	all-purpose flour	<b>1 cup</b>	whole buttermilk
<b>1 tbsp</b>	granulated sugar	<b>1 large</b>	egg <i>lightly beaten</i>
<b>1 1/2 tsp</b>	baking powder	<b>2 tbsp</b>	rendered bacon fat <i>melted and slightly cooled</i>
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	baking soda	<b>1/2 cup</b>	sweet yellow onion <i>finely minced</i>
<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>2 qt</b>	peanut oil

## PREPARATION

- **Prepare a landing zone.**

Set up a wire cooling rack set over a paper-towel-lined sheet pan.

- **Prepare the piping bag.**

Transfer the batter into a large piping bag fitted with a large round tip, or a heavy-duty gallon zip-top bag with one bottom corner snipped off to create a 3/4-inch wide hole.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Heat the peanut oil in a heavy cast-iron Dutch oven to 350°F.**

Do this over medium-high heat on your stovetop, or take it outside and set the pot directly on the grates of your charcoal kettle over remaining coals to keep the frying smells out of the house.

- 2. Combine the dry ingredients in a large mixing bowl.**

Whisk together the cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and cayenne pepper.

**1. Whisk the wet ingredients in a separate bowl.**

Thoroughly mix the buttermilk, beaten egg, melted bacon fat, and minced sweet yellow onion.

**2. Fold the wet mixture into the dry matrix and let it rest.**

Use a spatula to gently fold the ingredients just until the dry spots disappear, then leave the thick, lumpy batter undisturbed for 10 minutes to hydrate the cornmeal and activate the leavening.

**3. Pipe the batter directly into the shimmering oil.**

Working in batches of 6 to 8 to prevent the oil temperature from dropping drastically, squeeze 2-inch long strips into the oil, using a butter knife or your thumb to snip the batter from the bag.

**4. Fry until a deep, even golden brown.**

This should take 3 to 4 minutes total; use a spider skimmer to gently flip the hush puppies halfway through the cook.

**5. Drain and serve immediately.**

Transfer the hush puppies to the prepared wire rack to let excess oil drip away, and serve while the insides are still steaming hot.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Manage your oil temperature religiously.**

If the oil drops below 350°F, the batter absorbs grease; if it exceeds 375°F, the outside burns before the center cooks.

● **Do not overmix the batter.**

Overworking the flour develops gluten, resulting in dense, chewy fritters rather than light, airy ones.

● **The freeze and reheat.**

Hush puppies freeze exceptionally well. Fry all your leftover batter, freeze them flat on a baking sheet, and reheat later in a 375°F oven for 5 to 8 minutes to restore their crunch.



## Central Texas Mustard & Dill Potato Salad

A good piece of meat demands respect, and in Central Texas, respect means a side dish that knows its place. This isn't some saccharine, mayonnaise-drenched picnic afterthought, nor is it the bizarre European misinterpretation laced with sweet barbecue sauce. Born from nineteenth-century German immigrants and tempered in the grueling heat of Hill Country meat markets, this potato salad is a functional masterpiece. It is unapologetically sharp, wielding yellow mustard, dill pickle brine, and apple cider vinegar like a scalpel to cut straight through the rich, rendered fat of a long-smoked post oak brisket, resetting your palate for the next glorious bite.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>3 lb</b>	Russet or Yukon Gold potatoes <i>peeled and cut into uniform 3/4-inch cubes</i>	<b>1/3 cup</b>	prepared yellow mustard
<b>1 tbsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1/4 cup</b>	sour cream
<b>4 large</b>	hard-boiled eggs <i>peeled and roughly chopped</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	dill pickle juice
<b>1 cup</b>	celery <i>finely diced</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	apple cider vinegar
<b>1/2 cup</b>	red onion <i>finely minced</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	coarse black pepper
<b>3/4 cup</b>	dill pickles <i>finely chopped</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1 cup</b>	mayonnaise	<b>1/4 tsp</b>	cayenne pepper
		<b>3 tbsp</b>	fresh dill <i>finely chopped</i>
		<b>2 tbsp</b>	fresh chives <i>finely chopped</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Rinse the minced red onion under cold running water for 10 seconds before adding it to the salad.**

This washes away the harsh, sulfurous bite while retaining the necessary crunch.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Place the cubed potatoes into a large heavy-bottomed pot and cover them with cold water by at least two inches.**

Add the 1 tablespoon of kosher salt and bring to a rolling boil over high heat, then reduce to a vigorous simmer for 10 to 12 minutes until just fork-tender.

- 2. Drain the potatoes thoroughly and spread them in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet.**

Immediately sprinkle the apple cider vinegar over the hot potatoes so the warm starches absorb the acid, then allow them to cool completely to room temperature.

- 1. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, yellow mustard, sour cream, dill pickle juice, black pepper, cayenne, and remaining kosher salt.**  
Whisk vigorously until the dressing is completely smooth and cohesive.
- 2. Add the cooled potatoes, chopped eggs, celery, red onion, dill pickles, dill, and chives to the dressing.**  
Fold the ingredients together gently with a large rubber spatula, allowing a few potato edges to naturally break down and thicken the sauce without mashing the mixture into a puree.
- 3. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.**  
A proper Texas potato salad requires time for the flavors to meld and the starches to firm up, making an overnight rest highly recommended.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **To create a smoked German variation that bridges the gap between the protein and the sides, smoke the potatoes whole before cubing.**  
Rub whole potatoes lightly with neutral oil or bacon fat and smoke at 225F for two hours alongside your brisket or pork shoulder, then cube with the skins on.
- **If you are relying on the kitchen oven for your barbecue, fake the funk by modifying the dressing.**  
Substitute half of the dressing's kosher salt with a high-quality hickory or oak-smoked sea salt, or swap a tablespoon of the mayonnaise for rendered bacon fat to mimic the historic smokehouse profile indoors.



## Kansas City "Burnt End" Pit Beans

Texas treats beans as an afterthought, a distraction from the meat, but Kansas City elevates them to the main stage. The secret to authentic pit beans isn't soaking dried legumes for days; it's doctoring canned staples with dark molasses, tangy tomato, and the rendering fat of smoked brisket point—the legendary burnt end. Whether you're sliding a Dutch oven into a hickory-fueled offset or relying on your trusty kitchen oven, this is the unapologetic, sticky-sweet soul of the Midwest, uncompromising and deeply comforting.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1/2 lb</b>	smoked brisket burnt ends <i>chopped into 1/2-inch cubes</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	Kansas City-style BBQ sauce
<b>1 med</b>	sweet onion <i>finely diced</i>	<b>1/2 cup</b>	dark brown sugar <i>firmly packed</i>
<b>1 med</b>	green or red bell pepper <i>cored, seeded, and finely diced</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	dark molasses
<b>3 small</b>	cloves garlic <i>minced</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	ketchup
<b>28 oz</b>	canned pork and beans <i>undrained</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	apple cider vinegar
<b>15 oz</b>	canned black beans <i>rinsed and drained</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	yellow or Dijon mustard
<b>15 oz</b>	canned dark red kidney beans <i>rinsed and drained</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	Kansas City BBQ rub
		<b>1 1/2 tsp</b>	hickory liquid smoke <i>if using the indoor oven method</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Set up the charcoal kettle snake method for steady, indirect heat.**

If you don't have a dedicated smoker, line the perimeter of your Weber kettle's charcoal grate with a semi-circle of unlit briquettes, two wide and two high. Space chunks of hickory wood along the first half. Ignite 8 to 10 coals and place them at the very head of the snake to create a slow-burning fuse that will easily maintain 250°F.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Render the burnt ends in a large pot to release their residual smoked fats.**

Place a large cast-iron Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the burnt ends with a small splash of oil or beef tallow to warm them through and coax out the fat, then remove the meat with a slotted spoon, leaving the glorious fat behind.

**1. Sauté the aromatics in the rendered beef fat until softened.**

Toss the diced onion and bell pepper into the fat. Cook for 8 to 10 minutes until they are translucent and have lost their raw bite, then add the minced garlic and cook for one minute more until fragrant.

**2. Assemble the bean matrix and seasonings.**

Return the burnt ends to the Dutch oven. Pour in the undrained pork and beans, followed by the rinsed black and kidney beans. Stir in the BBQ sauce, brown sugar, molasses, ketchup, vinegar, mustard, and BBQ rub. If you are baking these indoors in a kitchen oven, this is the moment to stir in the liquid smoke.

**3. Subject the beans to a slow reduction to concentrate the sugars.**

If using a smoker, cook uncovered at 250°F over hickory wood for 2 to 3 hours until a sticky, caramelized crust forms. If using a charcoal kettle setup, place the pot on the indirect side away from the coals for 2 hours. If using a standard kitchen oven, bake uncovered at 300°F for 1.5 to 2 hours, stirring every 45 minutes to prevent scorching the bottom.

**4. Rest the beans off the heat before serving.**

Pull the Dutch oven from the heat once the mixture reaches a thick, velvety consistency. Let it sit uncovered for at least 15 to 20 minutes so the starches set and the sauce tightens into its quintessential sticky texture.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

● **The home cook meat substitution.**

You do not need to smoke a fifteen-hour brisket to pull this off. If you lack authentic burnt ends, substitute 6 slices of thick-cut, high-quality bacon fried crisp, plus 1 cup of chopped leftover smoked pulled pork or chuck roast.

● **Managing the moisture levels in the pit.**

If the beans begin to look dry and overly crusty before the proper smoke flavor is fully developed, fold in a splash of apple cider, beer, or chicken stock to rehydrate the mix and maintain a thick, soupy consistency.



# Texas-Style Sharp Cheddar Macaroni & Cheese

A proper Texas barbecue joint doesn't bury its sides under pretension. It serves unapologetic, heavy-hitting comfort meant to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with a slice of fatty brisket. This is a robust, smoke-kissed sharp cheddar emulsion stabilized with cream cheese to survive the ambient heat of a pit without breaking. It slides into the smoker exactly when your meat comes off to rest, absorbing that sweet post oak vapor until the edges bubble into a golden, savory crust.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 lb</b>	elbow macaroni or cavatappi <i>cooked in heavily salted water to 2 minutes under al dente, drained</i>	<b>1/2 cup</b>	unsalted butter
		<b>1/4 cup</b>	all-purpose flour

<b>2 cup</b>	whole milk <i>warmed</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	dry ground mustard
<b>1 cup</b>	half-and-half or heavy cream <i>warmed</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	smoked paprika
<b>8 oz</b>	extra sharp cheddar cheese <i>grated from the block</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	garlic powder
<b>4 oz</b>	Monterey Jack cheese <i>grated from the block</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	coarse black pepper
<b>4 oz</b>	cream cheese <i>cubed and softened</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt
		<b>1 cup</b>	panko breadcrumbs
		<b>2 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter <i>melted</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Bring a large pot of aggressively salted water to a rolling boil.**

The pasta will absorb some of the surrounding liquid while smoking, so cooking it just shy of al dente ensures it retains a dense bite rather than turning to mush.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Prepare your smoker or kettle grill for indirect cooking at 250 degrees using post oak, or preheat a kitchen oven to 300 degrees.**
- 2. Melt a half-cup of butter in a large cast-iron skillet or heavy pot over medium heat, whisk in the flour, and cook for two minutes until it turns golden blonde.**  
You want to cook out the raw flour taste until the roux smells slightly nutty.
- 3. Slowly stream in the warm milk and cream while whisking vigorously.**  
Simmer for four to five minutes until the sauce thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon.
- 4. Reduce the heat to low and whisk in the dry mustard, smoked paprika, garlic powder, black pepper, and softened cream cheese until perfectly smooth.**  
The cream cheese acts as an emulsifier, stabilizing the sauce so it will not break or become oily under the ambient heat of the smoker.

- 1. Remove the skillet from the heat entirely and gradually fold in the grated sharp cheddar and Monterey Jack by the handful.**

Off-heat melting prevents the cheese from splitting and releasing grease into your pristine emulsion.

- 2. Stir the undercooked pasta into the cheese sauce until heavily coated.**

If you built your sauce in a standard pot, transfer the mixture into a 12-inch cast-iron skillet or a disposable aluminum pan now.

- 3. Toss the panko with the remaining two tablespoons of melted butter and scatter it evenly across the surface of the pasta.**

- 4. Transfer the uncovered skillet to the smoker for forty-five minutes to absorb the post oak vapor.**

If using an oven, bake for thirty minutes until the edges bubble and the crust is deeply golden.

- 5. Remove the skillet from the heat and let it sit for ten minutes before serving.**

This brief rest allows the sauce to tighten up slightly, ensuring it clings to the pasta rather than pooling on the plate.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Utilize the kettle grill snake method if you lack a stick burner.**

Arrange unlit charcoal in a semi-circle along the outer edge of a kettle grill, place a few chunks of post oak on the first half, and light the front with a few hot briquettes to maintain a steady 250 degrees.

- **Hack the kitchen oven method with liquid smoke and smoked cheeses.**

For those cooking entirely indoors, swap the Monterey Jack for smoked Gouda and add a quarter-teaspoon of high-quality liquid smoke to the béchamel to mimic the pitmaster touch.

- **Grate your cheese directly from the block.**

Pre-shredded bagged cheeses are coated in anti-caking starches like cellulose that will cause your sauce to turn grainy and ruin the emulsion.

- **Time the sides to cook while the meat rests.**

Slide the macaroni and cheese into the smoker the exact moment your brisket hits 203 degrees probe-tender and comes off to rest in a cooler.





## Chapter 4 — The Sandwiches & Plates

*The specific architectures of barbecue consumption, from legendary regional sandwiches to the perfect smokehouse tray.*

Barbecue in a vacuum is just cooked meat. In the wild, it possesses a distinct, undeniable architecture. It arrives slapped onto butcher paper, bleeding through Styrofoam clamshells, or crammed into cheap commercial hamburger buns that immediately surrender to the grease. This is the sacred geometry of the joint: the careful, deliberate arrangement of sharp pickles, soft white bread, and perfectly rendered fat.

These aren't just vehicles for calories. They are regional identities forged in smoke and sauce. From the aggressive, slaw-heavy crunch of a Memphis pork sandwich to the neon-cheese salvation of a chopped beef Frito pie, this is how the locals eat when the lines die down and the tourists go home. Here is how you build the plates that matter.





## The Eastern NC Chopped Pork Sandwich

If you've ever sat under the wafting oak smoke at the Skylight Inn waiting for a tray of chopped whole-hog barbecue, you know the gospel of Eastern North Carolina. It is uncompromising, eschewing tomatoes and thick molasses for a sharp symphony of rich pork, biting vinegar, fiery pepper, and the ultimate textural secret of salty, shattered pork skin. We can't all shovel oak coals under a 150-pound hog for sixteen hours, but you can engineer that exact bite in your backyard or oven using a skin-on pork shoulder. Your first bite of this sandwich, studded with cracklins and crowned with sweet yellow slaw, will transport you straight to the coastal plains.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>8 lb</b>	skin-on pork shoulder <i>scored in a crosshatch pattern</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	light brown sugar
<b>3 tbsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1 med</b>	green cabbage <i>cored and cut into large chunks</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	coarse black pepper	<b>1/2 cup</b>	mayonnaise
<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar	<b>1/4 cup</b>	Miracle Whip
<b>1/2 cup</b>	distilled white vinegar	<b>1/3 cup</b>	white sugar
<b>1 tbsp</b>	Texas Pete hot sauce	<b>1 tsp</b>	celery seed
<b>1 tbsp</b>	crushed red pepper flakes	<b>10 med</b>	plain white hamburger buns

## PREPARATION

- **Mix the vinegar mop and let it steep at room temperature.**

Combine the apple cider vinegar, white vinegar, Texas Pete, red pepper flakes, brown sugar, one teaspoon of the kosher salt, and one teaspoon of the black pepper in a jar and shake vigorously to extract the heat from the pepper flakes overnight.

- **Dry brine the pork skin overnight.**

Dry the pork skin thoroughly, score it carefully without piercing the meat, pack it heavily with the remaining kosher salt, and leave it uncovered in the refrigerator to draw out the moisture.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Fire up the smoker or kettle to 250F using hickory or oak wood.**

For a kettle, employ the snake method with unlit briquettes and hickory chunks, adjusting the vents to hold a steady, low heat.

- 2. Wipe the wet salt from the skin and season the meat side.**

Brush the drawn moisture and salt off the skin, pat it completely dry, and season only the exposed meat with the remaining coarse black pepper.

**1. Smoke the pork naked to render and crisp the skin.**

Place the shoulder skin-side up on the grates and leave it completely unwrapped through the stall, lightly dabbing the meat with the vinegar mop every hour after the first four hours.

**2. Make the pale yellow slaw.**

Pulse the cabbage chunks in a food processor until finely minced like relish, then fold in the mayonnaise, Miracle Whip, white sugar, celery seed, and a half teaspoon of salt before refrigerating.

**3. Pull the pork when it hits 195F internal and slides off a probe with zero resistance.**

If the smoker didn't fully blister the skin, slice the skin off now and broil it on a baking sheet for five to ten minutes until it puffs into hard cracklins.

**4. Rest the meat in a faux Cambro for at least one hour.**

Place the meat in a foil pan, cover loosely, and stash it in an empty dry cooler to let the muscle fibers relax and reabsorb their juices.

**5. Pull the bone and chop the meat aggressively.**

Transfer the rested meat and the blistered skin to a large board, grab a heavy meat cleaver, and chop them together until finely minced and uniformly mixed.

**6. Dress the chopped pork and build the sandwich.**

Drizzle a half cup of the vinegar mop directly into the pile, mix it by hand, and mound the cracklin-studded pork onto a plain white bun topped heavily with the sweet yellow slaw.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The kitchen oven is a perfectly honorable workaround for apartment dwellers.**

Follow the same prep but roast at 300F on a wire rack for six to eight hours, using a teaspoon of liquid smoke rubbed on the meat and finishing the skin under the broiler.

- **The stall is not your enemy here.**

Do not wrap the pork in foil or butcher paper at 160F, as trapping the steam will turn the skin rubbery and ruin the cracklins that define this sandwich.



## The Lexington "Outside Brown" Sliced Pork Sandwich

In the taxonomy of North Carolina barbecue, ordering an "outside brown" is the ultimate flex. It separates the true aficionado from the passing tourist. This is a sandwich built on the deeply smoked, violently caramelized outer crust of a pork shoulder that has endured a ten-hour trial by hickory. Dressed with a thin, sharp vinegar-ketchup dip and a crunchy, mayo-free red slaw, it is a hyper-regional masterpiece. No foil. No shortcuts. Just smoke, time, and the understanding that the best part of the pig is the part that fought the fire.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 (7 to 9 lb)</b>	bone-in pork shoulder (Boston Butt)	<b>1 tbsp</b>	crushed red pepper flakes
<b>3 tbsp</b>	coarse kosher salt	<b>1 tsp</b>	finely ground black pepper
<b>1 tbsp</b>	coarse ground black pepper	<b>1 tsp</b>	hot sauce
<b>1 tbsp</b>	sweet paprika	<b>1/2 cup</b>	water
<b>2 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar	<b>1 med</b>	green cabbage <i>cored and finely chopped (not shredded)</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	ketchup	<b>1 tbsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1/4 cup</b>	dark brown sugar	<b>2 tbsp</b>	ketchup
<b>1 tbsp</b>	coarse kosher salt	<b>2 tbsp</b>	white sugar
		<b>8</b>	soft white hamburger buns

## PREPARATION

- **Trim and season the pork shoulder.**

Trim any excessively thick, hard fat from the cap, leaving about 1/4 inch to render and fry the bark. Combine the 3 tablespoons of kosher salt, 1 tablespoon of coarse black pepper, and paprika, then coat the meat evenly.

- **Dry brine the pork overnight.**

After seasoning, place the pork on a wire rack set in a baking sheet and refrigerate uncovered for 12 to 24 hours. This draws moisture out of the skin and draws seasoning inward, setting the stage for an incredible bark.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Mix the Lexington dip.**

Whisk together the vinegar, 1/2 cup ketchup, brown sugar, 1 tablespoon kosher salt, red pepper flakes, 1 teaspoon black pepper, hot sauce, and water. Store in the refrigerator overnight so the flavors can fully meld.

**1. Purge and dress the red slaw.**

Toss the chopped cabbage with 1 tablespoon of kosher salt in a colander and let sit for two hours to draw out excess water, then rinse lightly and pat dry. Whisk 1 cup of the prepared Lexington dip with the extra 2 tablespoons of ketchup and 2 tablespoons of white sugar, toss with the dried cabbage, and refrigerate.

**2. Fire up the smoker to 250°F.**

Whether using a stick burner, kamado, or pellet grill, dial in the temperature to 250°F and use pecan or hickory wood for the smoke.

**3. Smoke the pork shoulder completely naked.**

Do not wrap the meat in foil, as doing so will create steam and ruin the bark you are working so hard to build. Let it weather the 160°F stall fully exposed to the convective heat.

**4. Mop the exterior to build the outside brown.**

After four hours, when the exterior has dried out and the rub is set, begin mopping or spraying the pork with a small amount of the Lexington dip every 60 to 90 minutes. The sugars in the ketchup and brown sugar will begin to caramelize, layering flavors into the bark.

**5. Pull the pork when it reaches 190°F to 195°F.**

At this specific target temperature, the collagen has broken down, but the meat retains enough structural integrity to be sliced rather than turning to complete mush.

**6. Rest the meat in a dry cooler.**

Remove the pork and let it sit at room temperature for 15 minutes to halt the cooking process. Wrap it in breathable butcher paper and rest it in a faux Cambro (a dry cooler) for one to four hours so the muscle fibers relax and reabsorb rendering juices.

**7. Harvest the outside brown.**

Place the rested pork shoulder on a large cutting board and, using a sharp knife, carefully shave off the dark, crusty, heavily smoked exterior meat into 1/4-inch thick slices.

## 1. **Build the sandwiches.**

Lay down a generous bed of the sliced outside brown on a soft white bun, drizzle with a little reserved un-mopped dip, and top with a heaping scoop of the red slaw.

### CHEF'S NOTES

- **The Charcoal Kettle Workaround.**

Arrange unlit charcoal briquettes in a semi-circle (2x2 stack) around the outer edge of your Weber kettle. Place chunks of pecan or hickory wood along the first half of the snake, light 8 to 10 briquettes at one end, and adjust vents to maintain 250°F. Place the meat on the unlit side.

- **The Kitchen Oven Workaround.**

Preheat the oven to 300°F. Rub 1 teaspoon of high-quality liquid smoke onto the pork before applying the dry rub. Create a 'smoke bomb' by filling a foil pouch with dry pecan or hickory chips, poke a few holes in it, and place it on the oven floor until it smokes. Cook the pork uncovered on a wire rack over a baking sheet.



# The Memphis Pulled Pork BBQ Nachos

Born in a minor league baseball stadium and perfected in the smokehouses of a city that reveres the pig, the Memphis Pulled Pork BBQ Nacho is a masterpiece of low-and-slow engineering. It works precisely because it refuses to compromise on the fundamentals: a proper, naked-smoked pork shoulder pulled by hand, a mandatory dual-cheese architecture, and a crowning hit of dry-rub BBQ shake. Whether you are tending an offset pit or nursing a charcoal snake on a weeknight, this is the uncompromising taste of West Tennessee served straight from a sheet pan.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>6 to 8 lb</b>	bone-in pork shoulder (Boston Butt) <i>rinsed, patted dry, and trimmed of hard surface fat, leaving a thin fat cap</i>	<b>1/2 cup</b>	dark brown sugar
<b>3 tbsp</b>	yellow mustard	<b>1/4 cup</b>	yellow mustard
<b>4 tbsp</b>	dark brown sugar	<b>2 tbsp</b>	Worcestershire sauce
<b>3 tbsp</b>	smoked paprika	<b>1 tbsp</b>	liquid from pickled jalapeños
<b>2 tbsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1 tsp</b>	hot sauce
<b>1 tbsp</b>	garlic powder	<b>24 oz</b>	sturdy round yellow corn tortilla chips
<b>1 tbsp</b>	onion powder	<b>16 oz</b>	liquid nacho cheese <i>warmed</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	ground cumin	<b>16 oz</b>	shredded sharp cheddar and Monterey Jack blend
<b>1 tbsp</b>	chili powder	<b>1 cup</b>	pickled jalapeño slices <i>drained, liquid reserved for sauce</i>
<b>1 tsp</b>	cayenne pepper	<b>2 cup</b>	chicken broth <i>for the oven method only</i>
<b>1 tsp</b>	black pepper	<b>2 tbsp</b>	pecan or hickory liquid smoke <i>for the oven method only</i>
<b>1 tsp</b>	white pepper		
<b>2 cup</b>	ketchup		
<b>1/2 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar		

## PREPARATION

- **Build the BBQ Shake.**

Combine the 4 tablespoons of brown sugar, paprika, salt, garlic powder, onion powder, cumin, chili powder, cayenne, black pepper, and white pepper in a bowl. Mix well, reserving 2 tablespoons of this blend for the final garnish.

- **Simmer the sauce.**

In a saucepan over low heat, combine the ketchup, apple cider vinegar, 1/2 cup of brown sugar, 1/4 cup yellow mustard, Worcestershire, jalapeño liquid, and hot sauce. Simmer for 15 to 20 minutes until slightly thickened and glossy, then let cool.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Bind and rub the meat.**

Slather the entire pork shoulder with the 3 tablespoons of yellow mustard, then aggressively pat your Memphis BBQ Shake onto all sides until the meat is fully encrusted. Let it sit at room temperature for 30 minutes while you manage your fire.

- 2. Smoke the pork.**

Preheat your smoker to 225°F with pecan wood chunks, and smoke the shoulder fat-cap up, completely uncovered. Leaving it naked allows the bark to form properly as it pushes through the stall naturally. Continue smoking until the internal temperature reaches 190°F to 195°F, which should take 8 to 12 hours.

- 3. Rest in a faux Cambro.**

Remove the pork, wrap it tightly in heavy-duty aluminum foil, and place it into a dry, empty beverage cooler. Close the lid and let the meat rest for an absolute minimum of one hour. This crucial step allows the rendered fat and denatured collagen to stabilize.

- 4. Pull, do not chop.**

Unwrap the rested pork, discard the bone, and pull the meat apart using your hands or meat claws. Never chop it with a knife. Toss the warm pulled pork with a half cup of your prepared BBQ sauce to lightly glaze it.

- 5. Construct the foundation.**

On a large, heavy rimmed baking sheet, arrange a single, slightly overlapping layer of round tortilla chips. Drizzle half the warm liquid nacho cheese evenly over the dry chips.

**1. Layer the meat and the second cheese.**

Pile the pulled pork generously across the chips. Follow immediately with a drizzle of the remaining liquid cheese and a heavy pour of the Memphis BBQ sauce over the meat.

**2. Melt the shredded cheese.**

Blanket the entire platter with the shredded cheddar and jack blend. For maximum melt, slide the sheet pan under a preheated oven broiler for two to three minutes, watching it closely to avoid burning the chips.

**3. Finish with the signature shake.**

Scatter the drained pickled jalapeños over the melted cheese, then lightly dust the entire pan with the reserved 2 tablespoons of Memphis BBQ Shake. Serve immediately, straight from the pan.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The kettle snake method alternative.**

If you are running a 22-inch kettle, build a two-by-two ring of unlit briquettes around the edge. Place pecan chunks on the first half and a water pan in the center. Light ten briquettes, place them at the start of the snake, and adjust your vents to hold 250°F. Smoke the pork over the water pan, uncovered, until it hits 195°F.

● **The indoor oven workaround.**

Preheat your oven to 300°F. Sear the rubbed pork heavily in a Dutch oven on the stove, then deglaze with 2 cups of chicken broth and 2 tablespoons of liquid smoke. Cover tightly and braise in the oven for 4.5 to 5.5 hours until fork-tender and registering 195°F.

● **Respect the dual-cheese mandate.**

Do not skip the liquid cheese layer. A commercial queso blanco or melted Velveeta acts as structural glue and provides necessary moisture that shredded cheese alone simply cannot achieve when subjected to the heat of the pork.



# The Alabama Smoked Pulled Chicken Sandwich

American barbecue rests on four foundational pillars, but Northern Alabama quietly built a fifth. In 1925, Big Bob Gibson faced the thermodynamic reality that slow-smoked chickens dry out on a hickory pit, and his solution was a sharp, peppery, mayonnaise-based baptism that insulated the meat and cut right through the smoke. This isn't a ranch dressing; it is an unapologetic, acidic elixir that redefines smoked poultry. Whether you are running a ceramic kamado, nursing a charcoal snake on a Weber kettle, or deploying an honest foil-and-liquid-smoke braise in a kitchen oven, the goal remains the same: push the dark meat until the collagen surrenders, pull it by hand, and

drench it. When the cook takes that first bite of smoke, tang, and fat on a soft potato roll, they should look up and say, YES, THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT BIG BOB GIBSON TASTES LIKE.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 qt</b>	apple juice	<b>3/4 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar
<b>1 qt</b>	water	<b>1/2 cup</b>	apple juice <i>reserved for the white sauce</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	kosher salt	<b>2 tsp</b>	prepared horseradish
<b>1/4 cup</b>	dark brown sugar	<b>2 tsp</b>	coarse black pepper
<b>1 large</b>	whole chicken <i>spatchcocked with backbone removed</i>	<b>2 tsp</b>	fresh lemon juice
<b>2 tbsp</b>	olive oil	<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt <i>reserved for the white sauce</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	BBQ rub <i>a blend of kosher salt, coarse black pepper, smoked paprika, and garlic powder</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	cayenne pepper
<b>1 tbsp</b>	liquid smoke <i>reserved for the kitchen oven workaround only</i>	<b>6 large</b>	potato rolls <i>buttered and toasted</i>
<b>2 cup</b>	mayonnaise	<b>1 cup</b>	dill pickles <i>sliced</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Brine the chicken overnight to protect it from the fire.**

In a large container, whisk the quart of apple juice, quart of water, half cup of kosher salt, and brown sugar until the solids dissolve. Submerge the spatchcocked chicken entirely, cover, and refrigerate for 4 to 12 hours so the lean poultry muscle fibers do not dehydrate on the smoker.

- **Emulsify the authentic white sauce.**

In a mixing bowl, combine the mayonnaise, apple cider vinegar, half cup of apple juice, horseradish, coarse black pepper, lemon juice, teaspoon of salt, and cayenne. Whisk vigorously until the emulsion holds—it should be notably thin—and refrigerate for at least four hours so the pungent compounds can bloom in the fat.

- **Dry the bird and apply the rub.**

Remove the chicken from the brine and pat it completely bone-dry with paper towels, as moisture is the absolute enemy of a good bark. Brush lightly with olive oil and generously massage the barbecue rub onto all sides, ensuring some of the spice gets pushed under the skin directly onto the meat.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Prepare the cooker with applewood for a low and slow smoke.**

For a pellet smoker or kamado, preheat to 275°F with applewood chunks or pellets. For a Weber kettle, build a 2x1 charcoal snake around the perimeter, placing 3 to 4 applewood chunks on the first half of the unlit coals, light the head, and add a center water pan to maintain 275°F. For the indoor workaround, simply preheat the kitchen oven to 300°F.

- 2. Smoke or braise the chicken until the dark meat reaches its structural breaking point.**

Place the spatchcocked bird bone-side down on the smoker grates, letting it roll naked without a stall to absorb smoke and build bark. For the oven method, place the chicken in a deep roasting pan, mix the liquid smoke with a quarter cup of water, pour it into the bottom, and cover the pan tightly with heavy-duty foil to create a steam braise.

- 3. Pull the white meat early and push the dark meat to the brink.**

Chicken is a physiological dichotomy, so you must remove the breasts when they hit 165°F to save them from drying out. Leave the thighs and legs on the heat until they reach 180°F to 185°F, the precise threshold where stubborn connective tissues melt into rich gelatin, ensuring a flawless pull.

**1. Rest the bird in a faux Cambro to settle the juices.**

Remove the finished chicken from the heat, wrap it tightly in aluminum foil, and place it in an empty, insulated cooler or an unlit oven for a minimum of 45 minutes to an hour. This mandatory rest allows the volatile juices to redistribute and settle back into the muscle fibers.

**2. Hand-pull the meat and baptize it in the white sauce.**

Discard the bones and gristle, and using two forks or gloved hands, shred the meat into thick, rustic strands—pull, do not chop, or you will destroy the hard-earned texture. Finely mince the smoked skin and toss it back in for concentrated fat and smoke, then pour one cup of the thin white sauce directly over the steaming meat and toss vigorously until completely coated.

**3. Construct the sandwich on a soft potato roll.**

Pile the sauced, pulled chicken generously onto the toasted buns, drizzle with an additional spoonful of the white sauce, and crown with cold, crisp dill pickles.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Respect the liquid smoke if you are using the oven workaround.**

Liquid smoke is not a chemical abomination; it is literal condensed wood smoke with the carcinogenic soot filtered out. Used honestly in a sealed 300°F oven braise, it is a perfectly valid and deeply flavorful path to great BBQ for apartment dwellers.



## The "New School" Texas Brisket Chili Frito Pie

This is the zenith of Central Texas barbecue transposed into the ultimate street food, honoring both the minimalist thermodynamics of smoked brisket and the indigenous roots of an authentic, beanless Texas Red. A Frito pie built not from cafeteria compromises, but with a complex, seven-chile gravy and crowned with a pristine slice of post-oak smoked brisket. It demands patience and a respect for the stall, but whether you are tending an offset smoker, snaking charcoal in a kettle, or executing a clever oven workaround, the moment that peppery bark gives way to the chili and the crunch of corn chips, you'll know exactly what you've achieved.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>12 lb</b>	whole packer brisket <i>trimmed aerodynamically to a 1/4-inch fat cap</i>	<b>1 tbsp</b>	Mexican oregano
<b>1/2 cup</b>	kosher salt	<b>1 tsp</b>	ground coriander
<b>1/2 cup</b>	coarse black pepper	<b>1/4 tsp</b>	ground cinnamon
<b>4 large</b>	dried ancho chiles <i>stemmed and seeded</i>	<b>12 oz</b>	dark Mexican beer
<b>2 med</b>	dried guajillo chiles <i>stemmed and seeded</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	strong black coffee
<b>2 med</b>	dried pasilla chiles <i>stemmed and seeded</i>	<b>2 cup</b>	low-sodium beef broth
<b>2 small</b>	chipotle peppers in adobo	<b>3 tbsp</b>	masa harina
<b>4 slices</b>	thick-cut bacon <i>chopped</i>	<b>4 cup</b>	Fritos corn chips
<b>1 large</b>	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	sharp cheddar cheese <i>freshly grated</i>
<b>6 cloves</b>	garlic <i>minced</i>	<b>1 med</b>	red onion <i>finely diced</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	ground cumin	<b>1/4 cup</b>	fresh cilantro <i>roughly chopped</i>
		<b>1/2 cup</b>	sour cream
		<b>1/2 cup</b>	escabeche

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Smoke the brisket using post oak at 275F until the bark sets and you hit the stall.**

Combine the salt and 16-mesh black pepper, then coat the trimmed brisket generously on all sides. Prepare your smoker, pellet grill with post oak, or a charcoal kettle to maintain an indirect 275F. Smoke undisturbed until the bark is dark mahogany and the internal temperature hits 165F.

- 1. Wrap the meat tightly in butcher paper and push through until it is completely probe-tender.**

Wrap the brisket tightly in unwaxed pink butcher paper to preserve moisture while maintaining the crust. Continue cooking until a probe thermometer slides into the thickest part of the flat with zero resistance, hitting a target of 203F.

- 2. Rest the brisket for at least two hours before slicing the flat and chopping the point for the chili.**

Place the wrapped brisket in a dry cooler or an oven set to 170F to allow the muscle fibers to relax and reabsorb the rendered collagen. When ready, slice the flat across the grain for the plate, and chop 2 pounds of the fattier point meat to serve as the foundation of your chili.

- 3. Toast the dried chiles in a dry skillet before rehydrating them in boiling water.**

Heat a dry cast-iron Dutch oven over medium heat and toast the ancho, guajillo, and pasilla chiles for 30 seconds per side until fragrant. Turn off the heat, cover them with boiling water, and let soak for 30 minutes until pliable.

- 4. Purée the softened chiles, chipotles, and broth into a smooth, bright red paste.**

Discard the bitter soaking liquid. In a blender, combine the softened chiles, chipotles in adobo, one cup of the beef broth, and a pinch of salt. Blend on high until completely smooth.

- 5. Render the bacon fat and sauté the onions and garlic until deeply fragrant.**

Return the Dutch oven to medium heat and cook the chopped bacon until crisp. Remove the bacon bits but leave the liquid fat in the pot. Sauté the yellow onion in the pork fat until translucent, then add the minced garlic for one minute.

- 6. Bloom the spices in the fat, then deglaze the pot with dark beer.**

Stir in the cumin, Mexican oregano, coriander, and cinnamon, cooking constantly for one minute to release their oils. Pour in the beer, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom.

**1. Build the chili with the chopped brisket, coffee, and chile paste, simmering low and slow.**

Add the strong coffee, the remaining one cup of beef broth, the blended chile paste, the reserved bacon bits, and the 2 pounds of chopped smoked brisket. Bring to a boil, then immediately reduce the heat to the lowest setting, cover partially, and simmer for up to two hours until rich and cohesive.

**2. Whisk in the masa harina slurry to thicken the chili and add a toasted corn aroma.**

In a small bowl, mix the masa harina with a few tablespoons of water to form a slurry. Stir this into the simmering chili during the final 15 minutes of the cook to tighten the gravy.

**3. Assemble the pie by ladling the chili over a bed of Fritos, garnishing heavily, and crowning it with a pristine slice of smoked brisket.**

Lay down a generous foundation of Fritos in a wide bowl. Ladle the hot Texas Red directly into the center. Immediately blanket it with freshly grated sharp cheddar, sour cream, diced red onion, cilantro, and escabeche. Finish by proudly laying a perfect 1/4-inch slice of warm smoked brisket across the top.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

● **The Charcoal Kettle Snake Method.**

If you are smoking on a standard 22-inch kettle, arrange unlit charcoal briquettes in a horseshoe shape along the outer edge, stacked two wide and two high. Place post oak chunks uniformly along the top. Ignite just the first few briquettes at one end; the fire will slowly creep along the ring, providing 10 to 12 hours of steady 275F heat with clean blue smoke.

● **The Urban Oven Workaround.**

If you lack outdoor equipment, rub the brisket with salt and pepper, and apply exactly one teaspoon of diluted, high-quality natural liquid smoke. Bake on a wire rack over a rimmed baking sheet filled with a little beef broth, tightly sealed with heavy-duty foil at 275F for 6 to 8 hours until probe tender at 203F. Remove the foil and bake at 300F for 45 minutes to polymerize the pepper and simulate the bark.



## The Authentic Eastern NC BBQ Tray

If you've ever driven the rural backroads of Pitt County and stood under the billowing smoke of the Skylight Inn, you know true Eastern Carolina barbecue is a religious experience. This pork is never pulled; it is aggressively chopped with cleavers, folding crispy, smoke-rendered skin right back into the succulent meat. Dressed in a fiery, thin vinegar mop that cuts the fat like a scalpel, it arrives in a paper boat alongside a pile of finely minced, intensely sweet slaw and a square of dense, historic, lard-fried cornpone. This requires no offset smoker—just patience, a skin-on pork butt, and a willingness to wield a cleaver.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>8 lb</b>	bone-in skin-on pork shoulder <i>scored in a 1-inch crosshatch pattern</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt <i>for the sauce</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	yellow mustard <i>for the binder</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	coarse black pepper <i>for the sauce</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	brown sugar <i>for the rub</i>	<b>1 med</b>	green cabbage <i>cored and finely minced</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	paprika <i>for the rub</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	Duke's mayonnaise
<b>1 tbsp</b>	kosher salt <i>for the rub</i>	<b>1/2 cup</b>	granulated white sugar
<b>1 tbsp</b>	coarse black pepper <i>for the rub</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar <i>for the slaw</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	garlic powder <i>for the rub</i>	<b>2 tbsp</b>	yellow mustard <i>for the slaw</i>
<b>1 tsp</b>	cayenne pepper <i>for the rub</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	celery seed
<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar <i>for the sauce</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt <i>for the slaw</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	distilled white vinegar <i>for the sauce</i>	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	black pepper <i>for the slaw</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	Texas Pete hot sauce <i>for the sauce</i>	<b>4 cup</b>	white cornmeal <i>plain, not self-rising</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	crushed red pepper flakes <i>for the sauce</i>	<b>2 tsp</b>	kosher salt <i>for the cornpone</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	brown sugar <i>for the sauce</i>	<b>4 cup</b>	tap water
		<b>1/4 cup</b>	pure lard

## PREPARATION

- **Whisk together the apple cider vinegar, distilled white vinegar, hot sauce, red pepper flakes, brown sugar, salt, and pepper in a mason jar.**

Do not cook this sauce; simply shake it vigorously and leave it on the counter for 24 hours so the pepper flakes can bloom.

- **Make the slaw by tossing the finely minced cabbage with the mayonnaise, granulated sugar, apple cider vinegar, yellow mustard, celery seed, salt, and pepper.**

Cover and refrigerate for at least one hour to allow the salt and sugar to draw out the cabbage's natural moisture, creating the sweet pooling juice that defines the authentic dish.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Build the rub by mixing the brown sugar, paprika, one tablespoon of kosher salt, one tablespoon of coarse black pepper, garlic powder, and cayenne pepper.**

Coat the scored pork shoulder with two tablespoons of yellow mustard to act as a binder, then pack the dry rub aggressively onto all sides.

- 2. Prepare your kettle grill using the snake method or preheat your pellet smoker to 250°F with hickory or pecan wood.**

If weather forces you indoors, place the pork on a wire rack over a roasting pan in a 250°F oven, adding a tablespoon of liquid hickory smoke to the mustard binder.

- 3. Smoke the pork completely naked until an instant-read thermometer slides into the center with zero resistance at 203°F to 204°F.**

Do not wrap the meat in foil or butcher paper; the stall is necessary to harden the exterior fat into the crispy bark essential for an authentic Carolina chop. Expect the cook to take 8 to 12 hours.

- 4. Rest the pork in an empty, towel-lined cooler for at least one hour.**

If the skin isn't blistered and crunchy when you pull it from the smoker, briefly place the fat cap under your kitchen broiler for three to five minutes before resting.

- 5. Preheat your oven to a blistering 450°F with a large cast-iron skillet or metal baking pan inside.**

Once hot, carefully remove the pan, add the lard, and swirl until melted and smoking hot.

1. **Whisk the white cornmeal, two teaspoons of kosher salt, and water into a thin batter, then pour it directly into the smoking lard.**

Bake for 45 to 60 minutes until the cornpone is deeply browned and stiff, then let it cool slightly and cut it into rigid squares.

2. **Remove the bone from the rested pork and chop the meat rhythmically on a large board using two heavy cleavers.**

Finely dice the crispy skin into cracklins and fold them back into the pork, splashing the meat with a half cup of the vinegar sauce as you chop. Serve immediately with the sweet slaw and cornpone.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not pull the pork.**

Unlike other regional styles, Eastern North Carolina barbecue is defined by a heavy chop with cleavers, which integrates the rendered fat and crispy skin directly back into the lean meat.

- **Keep the sauce raw and transparent.**

Introducing tomato paste or ketchup to an Eastern North Carolina mop crosses the border into Piedmont territory—a culinary heresy in Pitt County.

- **Trust the oven workaround if you lack a smoker.**

A 250°F oven roast with a dash of liquid smoke and a final pass under the broiler to blister the skin will yield a surprisingly authentic tray for apartment dwellers.



# The Alabama Pork N' Greens Supper Bowl

Down in Birmingham, barbecue has evolved past the plate and into the bowl. This dish—a glorious, messy pile-up born of culinary pragmatism at SAW's Soul Kitchen—is a masterclass in Southern comfort. It is a foundational layer of rich, stone-ground cheese grits, buried under bitter braised greens and a mountain of tender, pecan-smoked pulled pork. The whole thing is cut by a sharp Alabama red sauce and crowned with crispy shoestring onions. It is a masterpiece of texture and regional pride, and with the right workarounds, completely achievable in your own backyard or kitchen oven.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>6 lb</b>	bone-in pork shoulder <i>trimmed to leave a 1/4-inch fat cap</i>	<b>1 med</b>	yellow onion <i>finely chopped</i>
<b>2 tbsp</b>	yellow mustard	<b>3 large</b>	garlic clove <i>minced</i>
<b>1 tbsp</b>	liquid smoke <i>only if using the kitchen oven workaround</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	chicken broth
<b>1/4 cup</b>	coarse kosher salt	<b>2 tbsp</b>	apple cider vinegar
<b>1/4 cup</b>	coarse black pepper	<b>1/4 tsp</b>	crushed red pepper flakes
<b>2 tbsp</b>	smoked paprika	<b>1 cup</b>	apple cider vinegar
<b>2 tbsp</b>	dark brown sugar	<b>1/2 cup</b>	ketchup
<b>1 tsp</b>	cayenne pepper	<b>1/4 cup</b>	water
<b>1 cup</b>	coarse stone-ground yellow grits	<b>2 tbsp</b>	yellow mustard
<b>2 cup</b>	water	<b>2 tbsp</b>	dark brown sugar
<b>2 cup</b>	whole milk	<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1 tsp</b>	black pepper
<b>4 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	cayenne pepper
<b>1 cup</b>	sharp cheddar cheese <i>freshly grated</i>	<b>1 large</b>	yellow onion <i>sliced incredibly thin</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	Monterey Jack cheese <i>freshly grated</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	buttermilk
<b>8 cup</b>	fresh turnip greens <i>washed, stems removed, and chopped into ribbons</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	all-purpose flour
<b>2 tbsp</b>	rendered bacon fat	<b>1 tsp</b>	kosher salt
		<b>1/2 tsp</b>	black pepper
		<b>1/2 tsp</b>	paprika
		<b>1 qt</b>	peanut oil

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. **Prepare the pork and manage your fire.**

Coat the exterior of the pork lightly with the 2 tablespoons of mustard, and press in a rub made of the 1/4 cup salt, 1/4 cup pepper, smoked paprika, brown sugar, and cayenne. For an outdoor smoker or kettle grill, set up the charcoal snake method with pecan wood chunks to hold a steady 250°F environment. If you are stuck inside, set your kitchen oven to 300°F, place the pork on a wire rack set inside a rimmed baking sheet, rig a foil smoke bomb with wood chips on the oven floor, and stir a tablespoon of high-quality liquid smoke into your mustard binder before rubbing.

### 2. **Push through the stall naked.**

Place the pork on the grates and let it ride. Around 160°F, evaporative cooling will inevitably stall the internal temperature. Do not wrap the meat in foil or butcher paper; leaving it totally exposed to the heat and smoke is the only way to build that deep, coveted mahogany bark.

### 3. **Rest the shoulder and pull by hand.**

When the meat reaches a probe-tender internal temperature of 190°F to 195°F, remove it from the heat. Wrap the pork tightly in butcher paper or foil, and place it in a dry cooler wrapped in old towels—a faux Cambro—to rest for a minimum of one hour. When ready, pull the muscle apart by hand while wearing cotton liners and nitrile gloves. Discard the bone and any unrendered fat pockets, and never resort to chopping.

### 4. **Simmer the Alabama red sauce.**

In a non-reactive saucepan, whisk together the 1 cup of apple cider vinegar, ketchup, 1/4 cup of water, 2 tablespoons of mustard, 2 tablespoons of brown sugar, 1 teaspoon of salt, 1 teaspoon of pepper, and 1/2 teaspoon of cayenne. Bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat until the sugar dissolves, then remove from heat to cool. It should remain thin and highly acidic.

**1. Braise the Southern greens.**

In a large Dutch oven, heat the bacon fat over medium-high heat, then sauté the medium chopped onion until translucent. Add the minced garlic for one minute, followed by the turnip greens, chicken broth, and crushed red pepper. Cover, drop the heat to low, and simmer for 30 to 40 minutes until exceptionally tender, uncovering for the last 10 minutes to reduce the liquid potlikker. Stir in the 2 tablespoons of vinegar right before removing from the heat.

**2. Cook the stone-ground cheese grits.**

Bring the 2 cups of water and 2 cups of milk to a gentle boil in a heavy-bottomed saucepan, then slowly whisk in the stone-ground grits. Reduce the heat to its lowest setting, cover partially, and simmer for 45 to 60 minutes while whisking frequently to release starches. Once thick and tender, take it off the heat and vigorously stir in the butter, cheddar, and Monterey Jack until smooth, adjusting seasoning heavily with black pepper.

**3. Fry the shoestring onions.**

Soak the incredibly thinly sliced large onion in buttermilk for 15 minutes. Heat your peanut oil in a deep pot to 375°F. Dredge the soaked onions in the flour seasoned with salt, pepper, and paprika, shaking off the excess, and fry in batches for 2 to 3 minutes until deep golden brown and crispy, draining them on a wire rack.

**4. Build the Big Hungry Boy Napoleon.**

Ladle a generous bed of hot, creamy cheese grits into a wide, shallow bowl. Layer the acidic braised greens directly over the grits, then pile a mountain of the warm, hand-pulled pork on top. Drizzle the meat liberally with the thin red sauce, and crown the entire dish with a massive handful of crispy fried shoestring onions.





## Chapter 5 — Drinks & Sweets

*The essential beverages and classic Southern desserts needed to finalize the backyard BBQ joint experience.*

Barbecue is a heavy, smoky, fat-slicked business. It demands a counterpunch. Down South, that salvation arrives in a sweating plastic pitcher of tea, brewed strong and steeped in enough sugar to rot your teeth on contact. It cuts the grease, resets the palate, and keeps you in the fight. You don't ask for a wine pairing at a cinderblock smokehouse; you ask for a sweet tea, or a half-and-half if you're feeling diplomatic.

And then comes the end of the line. Nobody really has room for dessert after a pound of brisket and a tray of ribs, but you order it anyway. This isn't about delicate pastry work. It's about battered aluminum pans of peach cobbler bubbling at the edges, proper banana pudding layered with vanilla wafers that have gone perfectly, deliberately soft, and sheet cakes meant to be served in squares the size of a brick. It is the necessary, sugar-spiked conclusion to the backyard ritual.





# Eastern Carolina Heritage Sweet Tea

If you want to start a fight in North Carolina, ask someone where the barbecue state line is drawn. But no matter where you fall on the chopped-pork divide, sweet tea is the undisputed lifeblood of the Carolina trail. This is the uncompromising, native-tested standard of generational roadside joints, relying on a brilliant local secret: a microscopic pinch of baking soda. It neutralizes the harsh tannins in the black tea leaves, keeping the brew perfectly clear and fiercely smooth. Whether you're running a charcoal snake method in a kettle or tending a pecan-wood fire to get a shoulder naked through the stall, this is the drink you want in your hand.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>1 gal</b>	filtered water <i>divided into 1 quart and 3 quarts</i>	<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	granulated cane sugar
<b>4 large</b>	Luzianne family-size iced tea bags	<b>8 cup</b>	pellet ice
<b>1/8 tsp</b>	baking soda	<b>1 med</b>	lemon <i>cut into wedges</i>

## PREPARATION

- **Ensure you are using filtered or spring water.**

Hard tap water contains minerals that will aggressively cloud the tea, defeating the purpose of the baking soda clarification trick.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Bring exactly one quart of the filtered water to a rolling boil in a medium saucepan.**

Immediately remove the pot from the heat source before proceeding to ensure you do not scorch the tea leaves.

- 2. Stir the baking soda into the hot water.**

This microscopic addition neutralizes the naturally acidic tannins in the tea, smoothing out the astringent bite and preventing the tea from turning cloudy when chilled.

- 3. Drop in the tea bags, cover the pot, and let steep undisturbed for exactly ten minutes.**

Do not steep longer than ten minutes, or you risk extracting harsh, bitter alkaloids that even the baking soda cannot fix.

- 4. Gently lift the tea bags out of the dark concentrate and discard them without squeezing.**

Squeezing the bags physically forces the most highly concentrated tannic acids out of the leaves and into the brew, ruining the smooth profile.

- 1. Whisk the granulated cane sugar into the steaming hot concentrate until completely dissolved.**

Trying to dissolve sugar in cold tea is a fool's errand that leaves gritty sludge at the bottom of your pitcher. The liquid should be visibly clear once the sugar integrates.

- 2. Pour the hot sweetened concentrate into a one-gallon glass pitcher and stir in the remaining three quarts of cold filtered water.**

Allow the pitcher to sit at room temperature for about thirty minutes to cool slightly before transferring it to the refrigerator to chill for at least two hours.

- 3. Serve the deep amber tea in tall glasses filled to the brim with pellet ice.**

Garnish with a lemon wedge if desired, and serve alongside a massive platter of pull-tender pork shoulder dressed with apple cider vinegar.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **The half-and-half trick is standard practice for mixed company.**

If you have guests who find authentic Southern sweet tea too cloying, do not alter the master recipe. Brew a second, identical batch omitting the sugar, and allow guests to mix the sweet and unsweetened tea in their glasses to their preferred ratio.

- **Do not let apartment limits keep you from the full barbecue experience.**

If you cannot run a proper smoker, set your oven to 300°F, rub a pork shoulder with salt and pepper, and utilize foil smoke bombs with hickory chips if your ventilation permits. When you pull the meat and take a sip of this perfectly clear tea, it will still taste exactly like it belongs at a roadside joint.



# The Kansas City Berry-Basil Lemonade

In Kansas City, where barbecue is defined by hickory smoke and heavy, sweet-and-tomatoey sauces, you need a high-acid counterpunch. This berry-basil lemonade isn't just a mixer; it's a pitmaster's palate cleanser. By smoking the simple syrup and fire-charring the lemons in turbinado sugar, we drag a standard summer beverage straight into the smokehouse. Whether you are running a competition-grade offset, a backyard kettle, or just a cast-iron skillet on a kitchen stove, this cuts straight through the fat.

## INGREDIENTS

**1 1/2 cup** filtered water

**1 1/2 cup** granulated sugar

**1/4 tsp** hickory liquid smoke  
*for oven method only*

**10 large** lemons  
*halved*

**1/4 cup** turbinado sugar

**6 cup** cold filtered water  
*or sparkling water*

**1 lb** fresh strawberries  
*hulled and quartered*

**1 large bunch** fresh sweet basil

**1 1/2 oz** Kansas City whiskey  
*per glass (optional)*

## PREPARATION

- **Fire up the equipment.**

Prepare your smoker or charcoal kettle to hit 250°F with hickory wood, or pull out a cast-iron skillet for the stovetop method.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Smoke the simple syrup.**

For the smoker or kettle, place 1 1/2 cups water and the granulated sugar in an aluminum pan at 250°F for 45 to 60 minutes until golden and aromatic. For the stovetop, simmer the water and sugar until dissolved, remove from heat, and stir in the liquid smoke. Let cool.

- 2. Char the lemons.**

Dip the cut sides of the lemons in turbinado sugar. Sear them cut-side down on 400°F grill grates or in a smoking-hot cast-iron skillet for 5 to 8 minutes until aggressively caramelized and blackened.

- 3. Juice and strain.**

Once the lemons are cool enough to handle, squeeze them into a bowl, scraping out the caramelized bits. Run the juice through a fine-mesh strainer to yield exactly 1 1/2 cups of charred lemon juice.

- 4. Muddle the berries and basil.**

In a sturdy pitcher, firmly press and twist the strawberries and basil with a wooden muddler until the berries are completely crushed and the basil is bruised. Do not pulverize the basil into confetti, or the drink will turn bitter.

**1. Assemble and chill.**

Pour the cooled smoked syrup and charred lemon juice over the muddled fruit. Stir in the 6 cups of cold water, then refrigerate for at least 2 hours so the basil oils can fully permeate the liquid.

**2. Serve over ice.**

Fill glasses with ice. If spiking the drink, pour 1 1/2 ounces of whiskey over the ice first, then pour the lemonade to the brim. Garnish with a fresh sprig of basil.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The kettle snake method.**

If you are running a charcoal snake method for a pork shoulder, place the syrup pan on the cool side during the first hour of the smoke. Char the lemons over the roaring coals later while the meat rests in your cooler.

● **Blackberry variation.**

If strawberries aren't available, substitute fresh blackberries. They offer a darker, more tannic alternative that holds up beautifully to the heavy hickory smoke.



# The Texas Hill Country Blackberry Cobbler

You have endured the fire, stared down the stall, and sliced that post-oak brisket with the reverence it demands, but a Central Texas barbecue feast is not finished until a warm, cast-iron cobbler hits the table. Originally built on wild, fence-line dewberries foraged by pioneer women, this dessert survives today on the strength of the "magic batter" method—a genius piece of Southern engineering where a loose dough miraculously rises through a bed of frozen blackberries and melted butter to form a perfectly crisp, deeply savory crust.

Whether baked on the indirect side of a smoky kettle or right in your kitchen oven, it requires no rolling pins, zero pretense, and absolutely must be topped with melting vanilla ice cream.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>4 cup</b>	blackberries <i>kept frozen until the exact moment of assembly</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	granulated sugar
<b>1/2 cup</b>	granulated sugar	<b>1 tbsp</b>	baking powder
<b>1/4 cup</b>	dark corn syrup	<b>1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt
<b>2 tbsp</b>	cornstarch	<b>1 cup</b>	whole milk
<b>1 tbsp</b>	fresh lemon juice	<b>1 large</b>	egg <i>lightly beaten</i>
<b>1 tsp</b>	vanilla extract	<b>1/2 cup</b>	salted butter
<b>1 tbsp</b>	bourbon	<b>2 tbsp</b>	turbinado sugar
<b>1 cup</b>	all-purpose flour	<b>1 pt</b>	vanilla bean ice cream

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Preheat your cooking vessel to 375°F.

For a pellet grill or kamado, aim for 350°F to 375°F. If using a charcoal kettle, set up a two-zone snake method for indirect cooking with a single small chunk of pecan or applewood. If cooking indoors, simply preheat your kitchen oven to 375°F.

### 2. Prepare and freeze the fruit matrix.

In a mixing bowl, whisk the cornstarch and the half cup of granulated sugar to remove any lumps, then gently toss with the blackberries, corn syrup, lemon juice, vanilla, and bourbon. Place this bowl directly into the freezer; keeping the berries icy prevents them from prematurely releasing their intracellular water and turning the batter into a soggy cake.

**1. Melt the butter in a heavy cast-iron skillet.**

Place the stick of salted butter into a 10-inch or 12-inch cast-iron skillet and set it directly into your smoker or oven for five to seven minutes until it is completely melted and begins to brown slightly at the edges, then carefully remove the hot pan.

**2. Whisk the magic batter.**

In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, the remaining one cup of sugar, baking powder, and salt. Create a well in the center and pour in the milk and the beaten egg, whisking just until combined. Do not overmix; a few lumps are perfectly fine and ensure a tender crumb.

**3. Assemble the cobbler without stirring.**

Pour the batter directly into the center of the hot cast-iron skillet right over the melted butter, allowing the batter to push the fat out toward the edges of the pan. Retrieve your ice-cold blackberry mixture from the freezer and spoon the berries and all their thick juices evenly over the top of the batter. Do not stir under any circumstances; the batter needs to remain trapped beneath the fruit so it can rise up and envelop the berries during the bake.

**4. Bake until golden brown and aggressively bubbling.**

Place the skillet on the indirect side of your smoker or the center rack of your oven and bake for 40 to 50 minutes. At the 35-minute mark, open the lid or door and sprinkle the top of the rising crust uniformly with the turbinado sugar. The cobbler is finished when the crust has risen to the top and is a deep golden brown.

**5. Rest the cobbler.**

Just as a brisket requires a rest for the collagen to set, remove the skillet from the heat and let it sit at room temperature for at least 15 to 20 minutes. As it cools, the cornstarch and pectin will tighten the hot fruit juices into a rich, glossy syrup.

**6. Serve warm with ice cream.**

Spoon the cobbler into heavy ceramic bowls and top each serving with a generous scoop of vanilla ice cream.



## The Piedmont Peach Cobbler

If you've driven the backroads of the Carolina Piedmont hunting chopped pork, you know the journey doesn't end with the meat. The ultimate flex of a legendary joint isn't just the smoke—it's the sweet, buttery, fruit-laced alchemy that hits the table right when you think you couldn't eat another bite. In the South, they call it the "Cuppa Cuppa Sticka." Dead-simple, entirely authentic, and the absolute perfect dessert for the backyard pitmaster. While your pork shoulder rests in the cooler, throw a cast-iron skillet on the fading coals, pour this batter in five minutes, and let the ambient heat do the rest. A subtle kiss of applewood smoke takes an already perfect dessert into the stratosphere.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>4 cup</b>	fresh freestone peaches <i>peeled, pitted, and sliced (about 5-6 med peaches)</i>	<b>1/2 cup</b>	unsalted butter <i>(1 stick)</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	granulated sugar	<b>1 cup</b>	self-rising flour
<b>1 tbsp</b>	fresh lemon juice	<b>1 cup</b>	granulated sugar
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	ground cinnamon	<b>1 cup</b>	whole milk
		<b>1 tsp</b>	vanilla extract

## PREPARATION

- **Prepare your smoker or oven for a 350°F bake.**

Once your meat is resting in the cooler, open the vents on your charcoal kettle or pellet smoker to hit an ambient 350°F setup for indirect heat. If you used the charcoal snake method, fully open the vents and drop a half-chimney of freshly lit briquettes to spike the temp. If baking indoors, simply preheat the oven.

- **Draw out the natural peach syrup.**

Toss the sliced peaches in a mixing bowl with the 1/4 cup of sugar, lemon juice, and cinnamon. Let them sit for 10 to 15 minutes.

- **Whisk the dry and wet batter ingredients.**

In a separate bowl, whisk the self-rising flour and 1 cup of sugar. Pour in the milk and vanilla, whisking gently until just combined into a thin, pancake-like batter. Lumps are fine; overmixing is not.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Melt the stick of butter directly in a 12-inch cast-iron skillet.**

Place the skillet on the smoker grates or in the oven for 5 to 7 minutes until the butter bubbles slightly. Pull it off before the milk solids burn.

**1. Pour the batter over the melted butter without stirring.**

This is the cardinal rule of Piedmont cobbler: do not stir. The butter will naturally pool around the edges of the pan.

**2. Spoon the macerated peaches and their juices evenly over the batter.**

Again, do not stir. The magic relies on the batter puffing and rising up through the fruit during the bake.

**3. Bake the cobbler over indirect heat for 45 to 55 minutes.**

If using a charcoal grill, add a single fist-sized chunk of apple or pecan wood to the coals before closing the lid. The cobbler is done when the center is set and the buttery edges are a deep, crispy golden-brown.

**4. Let the cobbler rest for at least 15 minutes before serving.**

The fruit syrup will be napalm-hot. Let it cool and thicken slightly, then serve warm with a generous scoop of vanilla bean ice cream.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

● **The All-Purpose Flour Workaround.**

If you do not have self-rising flour in the pantry, whisk 1 cup of all-purpose flour with 1 1/2 tsp baking powder and 1/4 tsp fine sea salt.

● **Faking the Fire Indoors.**

Baking in the kitchen? Add exactly one drop of high-quality liquid smoke (applewood or hickory) to the melted butter before adding the batter. You want a subliminal whisper of the backyard, not a campfire.

● **Out-of-Season Peaches.**

If it isn't high summer, swap in 32 oz of high-quality canned sliced peaches. Drain them thoroughly so you do not waterlog the batter.



# Memphis Golden Fried Apple Pies

If you've driven down Elvis Presley Boulevard in Memphis and stood inside A&R Bar-B-Que, you know that the only acceptable way to finish a platter of hickory-smoked, dry-rub ribs is with a blistering hot, golden fried apple pie. Wrapped in wax paper and dusted with sugar, these hand pies are a triumph of Southern textural math: a crust that shatters on impact, giving way to a jammy, intensely concentrated, cinnamon-spiked apple center. We're doing this the old-fashioned way—meaning we eschew fresh apples, which weep water and ruin the

crust, in favor of dried ones. It's an uncompromising, unapologetic finale to a proper barbecue, engineered to be fried in a cast-iron skillet precisely while your meats are resting in the cooler.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>2 1/2 cup</b>	dried apples	<b>3 cup</b>	self-rising flour
<b>2 1/2 cup</b>	water	<b>1/2 cup</b>	vegetable shortening <i>chilled and cubed</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	granulated sugar	<b>1/4 cup</b>	unsalted butter <i>frozen and grated</i>
<b>1/4 cup</b>	dark brown sugar <i>packed</i>	<b>3/4 cup</b>	ice water
<b>3 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter	<b>1 qt</b>	canola oil
<b>1 tsp</b>	ground cinnamon	<b>3 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	nutmeg <i>freshly grated</i>	<b>1/4 cup</b>	cinnamon sugar
<b>1 pinch</b>	kosher salt		

## PREPARATION

- **Rehydrate the dried apples.**

In a medium saucepan, bring the dried apples and water to a boil, then reduce to a low simmer. Cover and cook for 45 to 60 minutes until highly tender and most of the water is absorbed.

- **Mash and sweeten the filling.**

Aggressively mash the apples to break them down. Stir in the granulated sugar, dark brown sugar, 3 tablespoons of butter, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Cook uncovered for 10 to 15 minutes until it resembles a thick, dark jam.

- **Chill the filling completely.**

Remove from heat and transfer to a bowl to cool entirely. If you put warm filling on raw pastry dough, the fats will melt prematurely and your crust will fail.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. **Cut the fats into the flour.**

In a large bowl, quickly cut the chilled shortening and grated frozen butter into the self-rising flour until the mixture resembles coarse cornmeal with pea-sized clumps. Do not overwork; the heat from your hands is the enemy.

### 2. **Bind the dough with ice water.**

Make a well in the center and gently toss the flour mixture with the ice water, adding just enough so the dough holds together when squeezed.

### 3. **Chill the dough.**

Turn the dough out onto a work surface, gather it into a ball, and knead exactly three times to bring it together. Wrap tightly in plastic and rest in the refrigerator for at least one hour to relax the gluten.

### 4. **Roll and cut the crust.**

Divide the dough in half. Roll each half on a floured surface to exactly 1/8-inch thickness and cut out 6-inch circles.

### 5. **Assemble the hand pies.**

Place two tablespoons of the cooled apple filling in the center of each circle. Wet the edges with cold water, fold into a half-moon, and crimp deeply with a fork to lock the seal.

### 6. **Heat the oil and butter in a cast-iron skillet.**

While your ribs or pork shoulder are resting in the cooler, place a 12-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat, or directly over the banked coals of a kettle grill. Add the canola oil and 3 tablespoons of butter and heat to 350°F.

### 7. **Fry the pies to a blistered gold.**

Working in small batches to maintain oil temperature, fry the pies for 2 to 3 minutes per side until the crust is deeply golden and shattered in appearance. Transfer to a wire rack set over paper towels to drain.

**1. Dust with sugar and serve immediately.**

While the pies are still piping hot and slick with residual oil, generously dust them with cinnamon sugar. Serve immediately.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **The Oven Workaround.**

For those restricted to an indoor kitchen without the stomach for deep frying, bake the pies. Brush the assembled dough with egg wash, cut small steam vents, and bake at 400°F on a parchment-lined sheet for 22 to 25 minutes. You lose that shattering, grease-kissed blister, but it's still a damn good pie.

● **Sourcing the Flour.**

If you can source Southern soft-wheat self-rising flour like White Lily, do it. If not, make your own by whisking 3 cups of all-purpose flour with 4 1/2 teaspoons of baking powder and 1 1/2 teaspoons of fine sea salt.

● **The Faux Cambro Synergy.**

This is how you bridge the pit and the kitchen. The dough and filling can be made days ahead. Fry these exactly when your smoked meat is undergoing its mandatory hour-long rest in a cooler.



# Central Texas Classic Banana Pudding

You spent twelve hours managing a firebox, pushed a prime brisket through the stall, and now it is resting in a cooler. Your reward is this pudding. It honors the old-school Texas meat markets by skipping the instant boxed powders entirely in favor of a rich, velvety stovetop custard, fortified with a mashed banana and layered with wafers that transform in the icebox into a delicate cake. It is the perfect, cooling counterpunch to a heavy, fat-rendered, smoke-ringed meal—and gives you an option to utilize that dying smoker heat for a bourbon-glazed upgrade.

## INGREDIENTS

<b>3/4 cup</b>	granulated sugar	<b>1 med</b>	medium very ripe banana <i>thoroughly mashed</i>
<b>1/3 cup</b>	all-purpose flour	<b>11 oz</b>	premium vanilla wafers
<b>1/4 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>5 med</b>	medium bananas <i>yellow with minimal spotting, sliced into 1/4-inch coins</i>
<b>2 cup</b>	whole milk	<b>1 tsp</b>	fresh lemon juice <i>optional, for tossing with the sliced bananas</i>
<b>1 cup</b>	heavy cream	<b>1 1/2 cup</b>	heavy whipping cream <i>chilled</i>
<b>4 large</b>	large egg yolks <i>beaten</i>	<b>3 tbsp</b>	confectioners' sugar
<b>3 tbsp</b>	unsalted butter <i>softened to room temp</i>	<b>1 tsp</b>	pure vanilla extract or bourbon
<b>2 tsp</b>	pure vanilla extract		

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Whisk together the dry ingredients and dairy

In a medium, heavy-bottomed saucepan, whisk the granulated sugar, flour, and kosher salt, then gradually pour in the whole milk and heavy cream while whisking constantly.

### 2. Heat the base and prepare to temper the eggs

Place the saucepan over medium-high heat and whisk continuously until it begins to steam and gently bubble.

### 3. Temper the egg yolks to prevent them from scrambling

Take a half cup of the hot milk mixture and slowly stream it into the beaten egg yolks while whisking vigorously, then pour the warmed egg mixture back into the main saucepan.

**1. Thicken the custard over medium-low heat**

Cook for 5 to 8 minutes, stirring constantly with a rubber spatula to scrape the bottom and corners, until the custard is thick, glossy, and coats the back of a spoon.

**2. Stir in the flavorings off the heat**

Remove the pan entirely from the heat and stir in the softened butter, vanilla extract, and the thoroughly mashed ripe banana. Press plastic wrap directly against the pudding surface to prevent a rubbery skin, and let it cool for 20 minutes.

**3. Assemble the pudding architecture**

In a 9x13-inch baking dish or glass trifle bowl, lay down a tight single layer of vanilla wafers. Top each cookie with a banana coin tossed in optional lemon juice, then ladle half of the cooled custard evenly over the fruit to submerge them completely. Repeat with a second layer of wafers, bananas, and the remaining custard.

**4. Rest the pudding in the icebox**

Cover tightly and refrigerate for a minimum of 4 hours. This is non-negotiable; moisture must migrate from the custard into the cookies, transforming them into a delicate, cake-like sponge.

**5. Crown with Chantilly cream right before serving**

In a chilled metal bowl, whip the cold heavy whipping cream, confectioners' sugar, and vanilla or bourbon until stiff peaks form. Spread it over the chilled pudding in rustic swoops and garnish with crumbled wafers.

## CHEF'S NOTES

- **Elevate this to a craft-BBQ Smoked Bourbon Banana Pudding using residual pit heat**

While your brisket rests in the cooler, your pit is dying down to around 200F. Place a cast-iron skillet on the smoker grates with 2 tablespoons of butter, cook the sliced bananas in the ambient smoke for 10 minutes, toss with a tablespoon of dark brown sugar, and deglaze with 2 tablespoons of good bourbon. Use these smoky, caramelized bananas in the layers. For an indoor oven workaround, simply add a half teaspoon of liquid smoke to the skillet.

- **Seek out authentic Texas vanilla wafers if you can**

Nabisco Nilla Wafers are the accepted national standard, but if you want true regional authenticity, source Slaton Bakery Wafers from West Texas to give the dish its proper textural pedigree.



# Alabama Lemon Icebox Pie

If Central Texas is defined by post oak and brisket, Alabama is defined by the tangy perfection of white sauce chicken. After a heavy meal of smoked poultry submerged in peppery mayonnaise and vinegar, the Southern palate demands an acidic, cold counter-punch. Born of sweltering summers and pre-electric iceboxes, this pie relies on pantry-stable condensed milk and sharp citrus to chemically set the custard and reset the palate. It is the undisputed king of Alabama smokehouse desserts, requiring no fancy equipment—just good lemons, cold cream, and the patience to let the icebox do its work.

## INGREDIENTS

**1 1/2 cup** graham cracker crumbs

**1/3 cup** granulated sugar

**6 tbsp**     unsalted butter  
*melted*

**1 pinch**    kosher salt

**14 oz**       sweetened condensed milk

**4 large**     egg yolks  
*room temperature*

**1/2 cup**     fresh lemon juice

**1 tbsp**     fresh lemon zest  
*tightly packed*

**1 pinch**    kosher salt

**1 1/2 cup**   heavy whipping cream  
*very cold*

**2 tbsp**     powdered sugar

**1 tsp**       pure vanilla extract

## PREPARATION

- **Separate the eggs while cold, then let the yolks come to room temperature.**

Cold eggs separate much more cleanly, reducing the risk of a broken yolk. Room temperature yolks will emulsify better into the dense condensed milk.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.**

While historically a no-bake pie, a short stint in the oven guarantees a perfect, safe set. If your pellet smoker is already running at 350°F after cooking a hot-and-fast chicken, you can absolutely bake this pie in the smoker for a beautiful kiss of residual smoke.

- 2. Combine the graham cracker crumbs, sugar, salt, and melted butter, then press firmly into a 9-inch deep-dish pie plate.**

Toss with a fork until the mixture resembles wet sand. Use the flat bottom of a measuring cup to press the crumbs evenly into the bottom and up the sides. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes until fragrant, then let cool slightly. Keep the oven on.

- 3. Vigorously whisk the egg yolks until lightened, then whisk in the sweetened condensed milk, lemon zest, lemon juice, and a pinch of salt.**

As you whisk in the highly acidic lemon juice, you will feel the mixture instantly begin to thicken. This is the historic icebox chemical reaction happening in real time.

- 1. Pour the filling into the pre-baked crust and bake for 10 to 15 minutes.**  
You are looking for the jiggle test. The edges should be set, but the center two inches should still wobble slightly if you gently shake the pan. Do not let it brown.
- 2. Cool the pie completely on a wire rack, then cover loosely and refrigerate for at least 4 hours.**  
Overnight refrigeration is vastly superior. Just as a smoked pork shoulder demands a long rest in a cooler to reach perfection, this pie requires the discipline to let it fully set into a dense, sliceable texture.
- 3. Whip the cold heavy cream, powdered sugar, and vanilla until medium-stiff peaks form, then pile it high onto the chilled pie.**  
Swoop the freshly whipped cream all the way to the edges right before serving to provide a fatty, soothing buffer against the sharp citrus.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- **For uncompromising heritage, swap the whipped cream for a mile-high meringue.**  
If you want to replicate the towering slices served at legendary joints in Decatur, beat the 4 reserved egg whites with 1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar until frothy. Slowly add 1/2 cup granulated sugar, beating until stiff, glossy peaks form. Spread over the hot pie filling right after pouring it into the crust to prevent weeping, seal to the edges, and bake at 350°F for 10 to 15 minutes until toasted.
- **Substitute crushed vanilla wafers for a sweeter, church-cookbook-style variation.**  
Graham crackers provide a slightly nutty foil to the bright lemon, but vanilla wafers are equally authentic to the Southern tradition and harmonize beautifully with the condensed milk.



# The Texas BBQ-Joint Chocolate Sheet Cake

If brisket is the undisputed king of the Texas meat market, this cake is the queen of the post-meal repast. It is an unpretentious, high-yield marvel born in church basements and perfected under the glow of neon beer signs. The secret isn't elaborate pastry technique, but sheer thermodynamics: blooming cocoa in boiling butter and pouring molten fudge over the hot sponge the second it leaves the fire. The result is a crackly, fudgy masterpiece that provides exactly the sweet, lactic relief your palate needs after a tray of fatty, pepper-crusting meat.

## INGREDIENTS

**2 cup** all-purpose flour

**2 cup** granulated sugar

<b>1 tsp</b>	baking soda	<b>1/2 cup</b>	unsalted butter
<b>1/2 tsp</b>	kosher salt	<b>1/3 cup</b>	natural unsweetened cocoa powder
<b>1 cup</b>	unsalted butter	<b>1/3 cup</b>	whole milk
<b>1 cup</b>	water or hot brewed coffee	<b>3 cup</b>	powdered sugar <i>sifted</i>
<b>1/3 cup</b>	natural unsweetened cocoa powder	<b>1 tsp</b>	vanilla extract
<b>2 large</b>	eggs <i>lightly beaten</i>	<b>1 cup</b>	pecans <i>roughly chopped and lightly toasted</i>
<b>1/2 cup</b>	full-fat buttermilk	<b>1 pinch</b>	smoked Maldon sea salt
<b>1 tsp</b>	vanilla extract		

## PREPARATION

- **Fire up your cooking vessel of choice to 350°F.**

For a pellet smoker, load applewood or pecan pellets. For a basic charcoal kettle, build a two-zone indirect fire using the snake method and drop a single small chunk of applewood on the lit coals. For the apartment dweller, preheat a standard kitchen oven.

- **Grease a half-sheet pan.**

Lightly coat a 13x18-inch rimmed jelly roll pan with butter or non-stick cooking spray.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Mix the dry ingredients.**

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, granulated sugar, baking soda, and kosher salt.

**1. Bloom the cocoa in boiling fat.**

In a saucepan over medium-high heat, combine the one cup of butter, water or coffee, and one-third cup of cocoa powder. Bring the mixture to a rapid boil while whisking constantly. Immediately remove the saucepan from the heat, pour the molten liquid over the dry ingredients, and stir gently until just combined.

**2. Add the acidic dairy and bind the batter.**

In a separate small bowl, whisk together the buttermilk, beaten eggs, and one teaspoon of vanilla extract. Pour this into the heavy chocolate batter and whisk until it thins out into a smooth, pourable liquid. Pour the batter into the greased pan and tap it once firmly on the counter to release any trapped air.

**3. Bake until perfectly set.**

Place the pan on the indirect side of your grate or in the oven for 18 to 22 minutes. The cake is done when a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean and the internal temperature reads 200°F.

**4. Prepare the hot fudge pecan icing while the cake bakes.**

Timing is non-negotiable here. With five minutes left on the cake's bake, melt the half cup of butter, whole milk, and remaining cocoa powder in a saucepan over a gentle simmer. Remove from heat, whisk in the powdered sugar and vanilla until glossy and lump-free, then fold in the toasted pecans.

**5. Pour the boiling icing over the steaming cake.**

The exact second you pull the cake from the smoker or oven, pour the hot icing directly over it. Use a rubber spatula to gently coax the icing all the way to the edges.

**CHEF'S NOTES**

● **Let the cake rest in the pan.**

Unlike a brisket resting in a faux Cambro, this cake rests on the counter for at least one to two hours. The hot icing will seep into the top layer to create a dense fudge barrier, while the surface crystallizes into a delicate sugary sheath.

- **Serve squarely out of the pan.**

No elegant plating is required or desired. If you took the honest path and baked this in an indoor oven, scatter a microscopic pinch of smoked sea salt across the top right before serving to hit the palate with that atmospheric backyard memory.