

Spice Up Your BBQ

Wood smoke adds the most flavor to your BBQ. Rubs, marinades and mops are used to affect the flavors of the dark outside meat and help form the bark characteristic of barbecue. The taste of the interior meat may be changed by applying a finishing or table sauce. Excellent 'Q' can be made with some, all or none of these.

Rubs:

A rub is a combination of spices that is "rubbed" into the surface of the meat. The rub seals in the flavor of the meat, and help form a tasty crust. The rub pulls moisture from the air, and draws the juices from inside the meat. This reaction causes the meat to literally marinate itself. The best way to apply the rub is to sprinkle the rub onto the meat, wrap in plastic wrap and store in a refrigerator overnight. Of course, this, like most things relating to good Q, comes from experimenting and experience. Try different techniques to apply the rub and how long to let it set. After sitting overnight, the rub will have become almost pasty from all the juices. I like to rub this back into the meat. I also usually apply some more rub just before the meat goes onto the smoker. What kind of spices make up a rub? Most recipes have two ingredients in common: salt and sugar. These are also the two most controversial ingredients. Salt draws moisture out of the meat, and sugars will burn or caramelize on the surface. Moderation is the key! Some of both ingredients are good, but don't overdo it. Other common ingredients are: onion powder, garlic powder, pepper, cumin, sage, thyme, allspice, cinnamon, nutmeg and ginger. Learn the flavor of all the seasonings and herbs, and once again, experiment.

Marinades:

Marinades are used to tenderize and flavor meat. There are as many marinades as there are rubs. They all have several ingredients in common: acid, oil, and spices. The acid is to help break the meat down, the oil is to add moisture to the meat, and spices add flavor. The most common types of acid are fruit juices, vinegar, milk, wine and beer. The oil is commonly vegetable oil, but other oils can be used. Avoid using bacon drippings and butter in marinades that are to be used in the refrigerator, they will coagulate and be of little use. The spices are usually very strong, or assertive since they grow weaker the longer they sit. Care must be taken with tenderizers, vinegar's and citrus juices which can make meat mushy if left in too long. An interesting addition to marinades is ginger-ale for chicken and cola, 7-Up or Dr. Pepper for red meats. Do not use aluminum pans to marinate! The acids will react with the aluminum. Since most all pans are alloys these days, I prefer to use a glass baking dish or a large plastic bag to marinate in. CAUTION: Do not re-use a marinade. There is a very good chance that bacteria will be present from the raw meat. If you

wish to use the marinate in a baste, mop, or sauce, boil vigorously to kill the bacteria.

Brines:

Brining is submerging meat in a salt water bath. Enzymes and bacteria cause the meat to decompose. The higher the temperatures, the faster this occurs. Brining kills the bacteria and weakens the enzymes. Brining is only necessary with fish and poultry. Fish especially will become very mushy if not brined first. Poultry will get mushy also, but it takes longer, and red meats longer still. Brining a turkey will greatly improve the final taste and texture. . To make a brine for poultry, use about 2/3 cup kosher salt per 1 gallon of water. Add other spices as you wish, pepper, garlic powder, onion powder, brown sugar, and hot sauce are some of the most popular additions

Koshering:

This process is very similar to Brining, but the salt is put on the meat instead of in the water. I like to think of it as a Kosher Rub. Koshering is based on the Jewish religion. Prior to eating meats, all blood must be removed from the meat. Another name for Koshering is salting. The process is very simple. Put kosher salt on the meat, let it set, then rinse it off. Most boxes of Kosher salt have the complete directions on the side. Simply follow the directions on the side of the box

Mops or bastes:

Mops or bastes are applied during cooking. They help create a flavorful bark and preserve moisture. They may contain vinegar, beer, soft drinks, fruit juices, water and seasonings. The addition of oils help hold moisture in meat. Do not baste too often. It will not enhance the flavor that much more, and it will let heat out of your smoker and increase your cooking times. I like to place apple juice, or a water downed version of my marinade into a spray bottle to spray the baste on when I add fuel or water. The most popular way is to Mop the meat. You can find a brush that looks like a miniature floor mop to use. When mopping, most people keep the mop on the pit and just slop the mop over the meat. Keeping it on the pit will concentrate the flavors, plus it will pick up the flavors of the smoke, and the fat from the meat when you put it back into the mop.

Sauce:

I firmly believe that people use sauce to hide their mistakes! Good BBQ doesn't need sauce. I never put sauce on the meat while it is cooking. I much prefer serving a table sauce to let the eaters decide if they want sauce or not. I do like a mustard vinegar sauce with pulled pork, and a spicy tomato based sauce for beef.