



## HOW TO COOK A WHOLE PIG

Tips for Roasting a Whole Pig on a Meadow Creek Pig Roaster  
(or Similar Barbecue Cooker)



Yoder's Smoky Mountain  
**BARBECUE**

[SeriousBBQs.com](http://SeriousBBQs.com)

**So you're getting ready for the exciting adventure of roasting a whole pig. You have high goals and you want to do everything in your power to cook the perfect pig.**

We are here to help you roast the pig of your dreams. There is no magic mysticism to roasting porkies (or any barbecue for that matter).

So why not make it fun and easy?

Of course, we can't take all the work out of it, but who cares about the work when you're having a great time cooking barbecue?

## **Methods of Cooking a Whole Hog**

There are various ways of cooking a whole hog. We will briefly discuss the three most popular methods.

This guide is about cooking on a Meadow Creek cooker (or similar barbecue cooker), so we won't be talking about roasting your hog on a brick pit or a hole in the ground.

If you'd like to cook it this way, you can do a little research online or refer to this article for some great input:

<http://cuban-christmas.com/pigroast.html>



### Belly Down With Cavity Sewn Shut

Tom from [Smoke'n Dudes](#) sells whole pigs that are stuffed and ready to go. They remove the ribs, the spine, etc., stuff the cavity with pork butts, and sew it back shut.

Once the pig is cooked, you can cut an opening in the side of the pig and pull pork with tongs or a gloved hand.

**If you're preparing the pig yourself**, we recommend you leave the bones in the pig to make the preparation easier on yourself. If you want to end up with more meat, stuff it full of pork butts. Get some butcher's string and a big needle to sew the belly shut.



[Here is an example of string](#) you could use.

We don't inject or marinate the meat, but we heavily season the inside cavity of the pig with barbecue rub (seasoning). You can also stuff the cavity full of seasoned pork butts before you sew it shut if you want more meat.

You will want to cook your whole pig with the belly down (as in the photo above). On a Meadow Creek Pig Roaster, you will never have to turn the pig throughout the cook because the drip pan prevents charring and the design of the cooker creates an even heat. The skin helps keep the meat from drying out and the sewn belly retains juices.

Cook the pig at 300-325 degrees F and take the internal meat temperature up to **200 degrees F** for optimum tenderness. Check the temperature in about three places along its back with a probe thermometer.

The meat will taste a lot like it would if you cooked it in a giant oven (not much, if any, smoke flavor).

### **Halves or Butterflied**

With this method, you cook with skin on one side and exposed meat on one side. Sometimes the head is removed. *Halves* means the pig is split in the middle. (See the photo below for an example.) A *butterflied pig* is a pig that's split in the middle but still connected along the spine.

One advantage of cooking a pig this way is that you get authentic smoke flavor into the meat since part of the meat is exposed.

Cook the pieces skin side down to hold in more juices as the fat renders down. Season the exposed side of the meat at the beginning of the cook with your favorite pork rub.

Two hours later, and every 60 minutes after that, spray the exposed side of the meat with apple juice to help keep moisture on the meat. [Here is an example](#) of a nice hand-pump garden sprayer.

Make sure you never use a sprayer that was used for pesticides or chemicals like that. Wash it thoroughly with soap and water before using it the first time.





Since some of the meat is exposed, try to keep the temperature a little lower—around 275–300 degrees F. Halves or a whole pig without the skin cooks quite a bit faster than a whole pig with the skin on.

Be a little cautious about overdoing it and drying out the meat. The meat is fully cooked at 170 degrees F, but it may need to go up to 190-200 if you want to pull it.

### **On a Spit (Rotisserie)**

Some cooks prefer cooking their pig on a rotisserie and wouldn't think of doing it any other way for the sake of tradition or culture. That is fine. After all, barbecue is about having a great time cooking outdoors.

A [Meadow Creek Pig Roaster](#) does an awesome job of cooking uniformly, so we've never cooked a pig on a rotisserie. Unless you need to use a rotisserie to satisfy some fuzzy feelings or to appeal to a certain culture, just avoid the maintenance of all those moving parts and the hassle of wiring your pig to a rod. It will save you a ton of work.

## Additional Notes

The drip pan in all [Meadow Creek Pig Roasters](#) helps prevent charring and also funnels out the grease (except in the PR36). A barrier like this in your pig cooker is a big help in cooking the perfect pig and makes the grease a lot easier to deal with.

Place the cooker on solid, level ground where the cooker can't tip after it's loaded. Set a metal (not plastic) bucket or container under the drip stem for the grease to drip into.

Cooking time will vary, depending on the weather, thickness of the meat, cooking temperature, and how your cooker cooks, etc. Clear high pressure days are the best and overcast low pressure days are the worst.

Some pig cookers have a thermometer in the top of the cooking area. If it's really cold outside, this thermometer may not be giving you an accurate reading. Set a cheap oven thermometer on the grate or run a probe inside at the grate level to see if the thermometer is accurate.

Also, it's important to choose a pig that fits your cooker. You don't want to deal with a pig that's too long for your cooker and hangs over the end of the drip pan or your grease barrier. This is just asking for trouble because the pig will likely catch on fire or get too hot.

**If you're just getting started with pig cooking, it's important to keep an eye on the progress throughout the cook, so you can make adjustments as needed.**

The chart below can help you determine the approximate cooking time for a whole pig with skin. The weights listed are live weights.

Temperature (F)	125 lbs.	200 lbs.	250 lbs.
250 to 275 degrees	10-12 hrs.	12-14 hrs.	14-16 hrs.
300 to 325 degrees	8-9 hrs.	11-12 hrs.	13-14 hrs.
325 to 350 degrees	7-8 hrs.	10-11 hrs.	12-13 hrs.

Check the internal temperature in your meat with a probe thermometer.

The meat is fully cooked at 170 degrees F, but if you want to pull the pork, you may need to top it off on the high end of this range. However, some of the best pulled pork I remember eating was cooked to the 170's. If you're cooking a whole hog according to the first method we discussed, you'll want to take it up to 200 degrees F.

Use your own judgment to determine when the pig is ready. If it's tender and you're hungry, go for it! Just remember to check the temperature of the thickest parts first.

Once the pig is ready, remove it from the pig roaster and set it on a table for carving or pulling. Remove the skin and slice the meat from the carcass or simply dig in with gloved hands and pull it to pieces.

We like freezing pulled pork in quart-size freezer bags. This keeps the barbecue tasting great for a long time and makes it easy to thaw a small amount at a time.



There is plenty more that could be said about roasting a whole pig, but we hope this guide has given you some positive direction for making your first pig the *perfect pig!*

And by the way, if the snout catches fire or the skin gets too hot and breaks open, it's not the first time that happened. Don't get discouraged because your first pig doesn't turn out spectacular. Eat it (if you can) and try again!

Most of all, I hope you enjoy your day. Grab your favorite summertime beverage, sit back, and relax while that piggy smokes.

Happy queing,

Lavern Gingerich  
Yoder's Smoky Mountain Barbecue  
[www.SeriousBBQs.com](http://www.SeriousBBQs.com)

PS. Visit our website at [www.seriousbbqs.com](http://www.seriousbbqs.com) for some of the finest quality pig roasters, barbecue smokers, chicken cookers, and portable sinks in the world.

Copyright ©2010 Yoder's Smoky Mountain Barbecue.