

Top 10 Secrets

From the Barbecue Experts

Enjoy our 10 best barbecue secrets. Most of these apply more to slow cooking (smoking) than grilling, but there's something for all barbecue lovers.

Our goal is to help you enjoy easy and profitable barbecues for many years to come. If you've never smoked a pork butt or ribs, now is the time to get started!

And remember to enjoy yourself.

Thanks for reading,

Lavern Gingerich



Yoder's Smoky Mountain
BARBECUE

www.seriousbbqs.com

1. Fire your cooker with a propane torch.

You may wonder, *why not use lighter fluid to start my fire?* Lighter fluid is fine on an open grill, but barbecue experts will tell you that lighter fluid leaves a bad residue and taste in a smoker. This may be controversial, but why mess with it?

We enjoy using a propane weed burner to light our charcoal. This is the fastest and easiest way in the world to fire a charcoal cooker (without using lighter fluid) that we know of. This method also brings a large cooker up to 250 degrees F in short order.

[Click here for a torch](#) at Amazon.

Hook it up to a 20-lb propane gas tank and you're ready to go. Open the valve slightly and use a long-neck lighter [like this one](#) to light the torch. Adjust the valve until you have a strong flame and lay it up against the pile of charcoal.

Be careful not to aim it toward the firebox wall or the side of your grill. This can unnecessarily damage the paint. If you are firing an offset smoker with a firebox, point the torch toward the opening that leads to the cooking chamber. The charcoal should be lit within 10 minutes or so. Leave the torch on until the smoking chamber reaches about 225 degrees F.

2. Cook with 100% hardwood charcoal briquettes or lump charcoal.

We enjoy the satisfaction of cooking with high quality charcoal. Most charcoal briquettes that you buy at the store have ingredients that we are a bit scared of.

We use Royal Oak's [100% Hardwood Charcoal Briquettes](#) in our cookers. I understand the only ingredients in these are hardwood and a cornstarch binder. We think this beats Kingsford by a long shot.

Another great choice, or perhaps better choice for you, would be [lump charcoal](#). Lump charcoal is actually the purest form of charcoal available

and produces less ashes than briquettes. However, lump charcoal burns hotter and not as long as briquettes.

3. Know what to smoke and what to grill.

Some meats require high heat and very little time to cook and others like hours of low and slow cooking in indirect heat. Grilling is when we cook on direct heat with high temperatures. Smoking (or low and slow cooking) is when we have an indirect heat source on low temperature. For example, you will want a very hot fire for steaks and it only takes a few minutes until it's done. A pork butt requires low, indirect heat for hours until it finally gives up and becomes absolutely, amazingly edible.

So I would guess burgers smoked for 4 hours or brisket grilled on high heat are both great recipes for dog food. Don't quote me on that though; I haven't verified it myself.

4. Be careful not to use too much wood.

One common mistake is to use too much wood when smoking, and this can create a bitter taste in the meat. We prefer to go light on the smoke rather than too heavy.

We mostly use charcoal when smoking and add a few pieces of wood in the beginning for a little extra smoke. The meat takes in more smoke when it's cold than hot, or the first 30-60 minutes of the cook.

5. Wear the right gloves to keep your hands clean and cool.

Wear washable fabric gloves under disposable vinyl gloves when handling meat. This protects your hands from the heat and you can easily peel and trash the disposable gloves after touching the meat.

6. Spray your meat with apple juice while cooking to keep it more moist.

We like to spray our meat with apple juice while it's cooking. If you're smoking, open your cooker about once every 45-60 minutes and spray it until it's wet on the top and the sides.

[Click here for a nice hand-pump sprayer](#) on Amazon.

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

7. Time is the key. Give it enough time, but don't overdo it.

Learn how to cook at the right temperatures and how long you need to cook it. A common mistake in slow cooking meats such as ribs and brisket is to not give it enough time on the cooker. It takes plenty of time and patience. A common mistake on the grill is to overcook the meat. Burgers and steaks required high heat, and they easily dry out if you're not careful.

Time, the right length of time, is the secret here.

8. Watch the fire. Add charcoal when it's very hot to keep a consistent temperature.

You will probably need to add charcoal several times throughout a long smoke.

The trick here is to refill while the fire is still plenty hot, but not add too much at a time that it will get too hot once that fresh charcoal lights. For example, in a small smoker, it's better to add 5 pounds 3 times than 15 pounds one time. This secret can help you avoid temperature slumps and highs.

9. Wrap your ribs after smoking them to make them more tender.

When you first pull your ribs off the smoker, immediately wrap them really good in heavy duty plastic wrap and then in aluminum foil. Put them in an empty ice chest (without ice) for 30 minutes or so. They will come out more tender.

An ice chest cooler is a great place to store any meat right off the cooker. Line it first with aluminum foil and wrap it over your meat. Keep the chest closed, and it will stay hot and moist for hours.

10. Clean and maintain your cooker or grill.

This has to be the worst part about barbecue. But what's worse is to see your favorite cooker all rusty and in a total mess.

We like to keep some fine emory cloth and high heat paint around to touch up rust spots. It's surprising what a little hand sanding and a spray bomb of paint can do in a few minutes.

Never use sandpaper on stainless steel parts though. Pick up a stainless steel cleaner and polisher at a store such as Lowe's. These can cut the grease and make your stainless steel look almost like brand new again.

A hot water pressure washer works best for cleaning up the grease and mess inside your cooker, but even a regular pressure washer or garden hose and soap can work.

The easiest way to get your steel (or stainless steel) grates very clean is to use a food-grade degreaser. We recommend Zep's Super Doug Degreaser. Apply it with a garden sprayer and then wash it off with a pressure washer (hot water washer works best).

Please beware: This stuff can eat the finish on paint and even remove paint completely. Do not use this on painted areas or soft metals.

We hope you enjoy using these barbecue secrets.

I invite you to check out our full line of Meadow Creek barbecue cookers and portable sinks at www.seriousbbqs.com. We believe outdoor cooking can be much more fun and easy with the right equipment.

The folks at Meadow Creek Welding work hard to bring outstanding craftsmanship and revolutionary concepts to the barbecue world.

Thanks again for reading,

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