



GREAT BAR-B-Q PITS

And Their Masters

A PHOTOGRAPHIC TRIBUTE TO THE ART OF BARBEQUE

Florida Style

By George K. Foley

Foreword

Barbeque is an art. No one here will argue that... Having been pulled into the world of competition barbeque myself (not kicking and screaming I assure you) I have not only worked toward perfecting the art of the "Q", I have come across others working toward the same thing. Some cook for food and some for show. Many are very involved in both! The barbeque world is full of colorful characters. From my encounters with these has come this project.

This is very definitely a labor of love. I love good barbeque and the people that bring it to us. Coming from all walks of life I found folks that tended their smokers nearly every day. Others were just glad to feed their neighborhoods or family on the weekend. Some had restaurants and some had only the bug for competition cooking.

And smokers ? An incredible spectrum of pits, devices and gadgets is out there. The things we barbequers all love. Commercially available pits, pellet grills, kettle grills, water smokers, converted propane or molasses tank smokers, smokers on trailers, permanently built brick and steel smokers, smokers simply made out of stacked concrete blocks, smokers made out of stock tanks, direct flow smokers, reverse flow smokers.

In this project I wanted to show people the variety in the world of barbeque...the art if you will. There is also education here. Just look at the ideas to be had . Maybe something you see here will impact your next design? I ask you to enjoy....

George

Dedication

This project is dedicated to my wife Sharon, who does not always “get it” but is always there for me even if not for the barbeque. And to Daniel, Nathan, Megan, Brittany and Heather... who definitely “get it”. I love you all.

Team Carolina Sunshine has been competing in Florida Bar-B-Que Association sanctioned cooks for less than a year. **Head Cook George Foley** calls Lithia, Florida home and his is a family team including his sons, a daughter-in-law and the other son's girlfriend, and sometimes his own daughter. He has cooked for years and became interested in the barbecue business and competition thanks to a fellow "barbequer" Matt Barber of the Hot Wachulas BBQ Team from Lakeland, Florida.



Talked into the BBQ game, the team "got a call" for ribs in their second cook and were hooked. Good times and good friends were discovered.

Their smoker is a custom built trailer mounted "stick burner" of Foley's design. It is set up as a convertible reverse flow system (convertible from or to a direct flow) with an oversized fire box that can also be converted to a grill in an emergency! It is fueled by lump charcoal along with oak, hickory and pecan...depending on the meat. He is working on water injection system and a charcoal "maze" to reduce the time standing over the box.



"If I'm cooking on a stick burner, I'm sold on the reverse flow concept. She sure keeps a steady temperature now."
George Foley, Pit Master for Carolina Sunshine

These guys are generally light on the sauce but have their own line of North Carolina style sauces and rubs and remain as true to the brand as appeal to the judges allows. The team does some light catering as well as fundraisers and benefits but dreams include getting deeper in to catering and maybe even opening a "joint" one day. Right now they are just having serious fun !

Carolina Sunshine Competition BBQ Team
Lithia, Florida

www.CarolinaSunshineBBQ.com

Smokin' Joe's BBQ & Grill is the dream of **Pitmaster Joe Shirley**. He is self-taught and has been barbecuing for 20 years and is now located next to *Rick's Custom Meats* on Highway 39 in the Pinecrest area of what is now Lithia, Florida. It is definitely a family operation. Rick is Joe's brother and Smokin' Joe's is manned by Joe, his wife Starr and son Greg. Their Bassett Hound, Bertha, frequents the premises as well. They have grown over the last 9 years at this location and pride themselves on "down home cookin' from a family born and raised here". They offer a full complement of barbecue and sides. Ask about their "Starr Special"...worth the trip. Starr is the Sauce Queen around Joe's but is also quick to point out that really good barbecue needs no sauce! Just the same, if customers want it they can try several homemade sauces, to include Starr's famous Jalapeno Strawberry Sauce.



Joe has used several different smokers through the years. He started with an old converted refrigerator. These days you can find him any day with 2 or 3 smokers and a grill going. All are custom built ... from a 100 gallon tank, indirect heat smoker to a giant stainless steel monster with a water heater and warming box. Nice! Mostly Joe uses wood for smoke and heat though he may start the fire with charcoal. He likes the offset smokers and indirect heat.

"We're from here so are proud to serve the folks around here."
Smokin' Joe Shirley, Pit Master

Joe's does some advertising but his customers are his best advertising. His place has plenty of outside seating and a large portion of his business is catering.

Smokin' Joes BBQ and Grill
Lithia, Florida
(813) 737-3010



Ice Cream is his name and barbeque is his game. He may not even have a “real” name...or one he uses anyway. With a twinkle in his eye and gold in his smile, he is one of the true characters of barbecue. The Pitmaster at his current location on North 22nd Street in Tampa, he is pretty well known...but only as “**Ice Cream**”...and he won't say why. Chances are fair that he is the only man named “Ice Cream” you are likely to meet. And really an incredibly nice guy for someone who won't talk much!



His business is run out of a custom trailer with a monster of a direct heat smoker, complete with sliding doors, built into the back end with little room left for his kitchen. But he'll tell you he has everything he needs. A Volunteer Firefighter, he has operated the smoker at various locations in the same general area for three years.

“My turkey legs are pretty famous around here.”
Ice Cream, Pit Master

He cooks with wood and offers a full complement of barbeque and sides but Turkey Legs are his specialty ... because that is what sells...and they are good! He brags on his Collard Greens and his Mac and Cheese ... but he didn't have any ice cream !

He does do catering but wouldn't talk much about that either.

**Ice Cream's Delicious
Turkey Legs & B-B-Q
Tampa, Florida**



Uncle Mike's Smokehouse Grill is a cool place that keeps cool company. They are located adjacent to the Old Town Harley Davidson Dealership in Brandon, Florida. Uncle Mike is **Mike Tolley** and he and his wife Simone are the owners. **Randy Dalcour is their Pitmaster.** Their smoker is a huge (really huge) wood fueled, twin 750 gallon tank size, direct heat smoker. The thing has more doors than you have ever seen. Randy hails from Louisiana so his product has a little (and very nice) kick to it ... he just can't help himself! Randy was taught the art by his father, Joseph Dalcour, Sr. in the Louisiana style. Of course he has his secret family rub and just may turn out the best pork EVER! We wanted that recipe but it wasn't happening...says they main ingredient is love.



"...if you ain't got the love it ain't ever gonna work."
Randy Dalcour, Pit Master

Their pork is probably the specialty but their "Smoked Hog Wings" are pretty well known ... they are billed as "famous" and a particularly big hit on the weekends.

Besides the motorcycle patrons (a really fun place to be on the weekends...live music and all!) travelers and regulars, they have a large catering business. They also have the ability to hold parties in their lakeside pavilion. Located right on the lake, there are huge bread fed catfish begging for handouts at your feet. They are opened for lunch and dinner 7 days a week.



**Uncle Mike's
Smokehouse Grill
Tampa, Florida
www.UncleMikesGrill.com**

Soo Good Southern Bar-B-Que is ... well ...SO GOOD ! Located on Hillsborough Avenue in the Seminole Heights area of Tampa, this place is in an old Dairy Queen and is a throw back to the old barbeque stands. If you want to sit, there are two picnic tables ... and that's it. Mostly a take out place but you can usually find someone sitting at those tables. Manning the monster of a pit in back is owner and **Pit Master, Nate Wade**. That pit is a huge custom made tank that can sure smoke. It's locked up behind a barbed wire fence ... keeping his secrets safe. Like most he had several smokers sitting around on trailers for his catering operation.



Soo Good has a full complement of side dishes ... of the soul food variety. His Red Velvet Cake for dessert? Famous in this neighborhood is his SoulFood Sunday menu and his fresh brewed sweet tea and Sweet Tater Souffle and Peach Cobbler. Nate's philosophy is to "keep it simple".

Soo Good Southern Bar-B-Que
Tampa, Florida
www.sgsbbq.com

"My brisket is my best...I can't keep enough here!"
Nate Wade, Pit Master

Nate is also looking to get into franchising and is finalizing his model right now. Seems he has a pretty good concept going. He likes his brisket but customers rave about his pulled pork...and his sauce. He likes the thinner Carolina sauces but like most good pitmasters he knows good meat doesn't need sauce...but he has several.



Carter's Barbecue is a pretty visible but unassuming drive through place on Florida Highway 60 in Mulberry (South of Lakeland) Florida. It is drive through but you can "walk up" too...you just have to stomp on the same hose the cars run over to ring the bell. At this location for the last decade, Carter's is family owned and you'll find really nice folks ready to help. The guys seemed young but they know, and are rightly proud of, their barbeque. Owned by **Johnny Carter, Jr.** his staff carries his theme of good old fashioned barbeque. Johnny has been cooking most of his life and started in the business with his father. Coming from Decatur, Georgia you will find his take on that regional mustard based sauce here...which they also sell.



Pitmaster, XXXXXX will tell you he has been smoking BBQ for most of his life. And he had to show off his locally famous ribs. Good, GOOD! He spends his days on two smokers screened in out back; one a custom built cabinet type with probably 10 racks. The other is seen here, a direct heat oven type set up...and it works quite well. He is a wood man using oak and hickory

"It's about the ribs...that's what we do best."
, Pit Master

These guys can cook! And they sure seem to love their craft. Did I mention they are seriously having fun? Their sweet tea is also a crowd pleaser that lines folks up in the drive through on their way home. They also have a locally famous catering operation besides their huge drive through following.

Carter's Bar-B-Que
Mulberry, Florida
www.CartersBBQ.com



Traveling around looking at barbeque joints, one gets to see many different types and styles of Pits or Grills. Around these parts you can find them in just about any driveway or back yard. It's like my daddy always said ..."there's all kinds of people in the world." The same can be said for BBQ Pits and Grills. Here are some of the more interesting setups we came across:



There is a little bit of everything out there !



**So, is it a pig COOKER
Or a PIG cooker ?**





Smoking in style ...



...



This one needs some new smoke...

