

By: "Belly" Maynard - Glen Rose, Texas

I think that beef brisket belongs to Texas like peanuts to Georgia and pulled pork to North Carolina. But did you know, 'till about forty years ago brisket was a worthless cut of meat that most folks would just discard or grind into hamburger meat? Down in the hill country of Texas, ol' brother Wolf was buying all the brisket he could get to make his chili with. Then about 1950 two German brothers who had a meat market began cooking BBQ in their market to use up left over meat. One got the idea to smoke a brisket as he was smoking sausage one weekend. He left it all weekend in his smokehouse and on Monday as they were serving their que, pork, sausage & chicken, he cut a slice & put on each lunch.. Everyone began telling him how good and tender it was. With that they began to cook beef brisket for BBQ. So Texas owes the two German meat market brothers from the hills of Texas for our Beef Brisket BBQ. Now-a-days, like lots of things, the briskets of today are so much improved over time. The brisket of old time was over half fat, but with the better cows of these days we get lots better beef brisket. Still, the only way to make them good & tender is good, slow cooking over hardwood smoke. Here's the way this ol' Texan tries to cook good beef brisket.

Cooking Beef Brisket

- 1) Fat and marbling: Choose a brisket which has most of the fat down in the meat and not all fat on the outside. You do need a layer of fat on the outside too. Fat inside the meat will help keep it moist, so you still need some fat both on inside & outside, But remember selecting a good brisket is half the technique of good Que.
- 2) Size: A real good size is a brisket from 6 to 10 pounds, big or small will be more of a personal choice. Just remember that slow cooking for 1 1/2 to 2 hours per pound is a pretty fair time table for cooking a brisket at 225 deg (degrees F.)
- 3) Seasoning: There are as many ideas on the best way to season a brisket as there are brisket cooks. No two will do the same and very few will do it the same way two times in a row: You can Marinate, dry rub or both; or sprinkle it with spices; or do all three. I, myself do a little of it all.
 - 3A) Marinate: May be a store bought marinade or maybe your own. I use a mix of Beer, Dr. Waco (similar to Dr. Pepper) and Willingham's marinade & let marinate overnight. Dry it off next morning & let it set for about half hour.
 - 3B) Dry Rub: I use a mix of Garlic power, black pepper, salt, cumin, red pepper & a little brown sugar. There are lots of good dry rub out there on the market. Try them.
- 4) Fire: It don't make a big difference what or how you are cooking as long as you have a good low long-time steady heat; may it be wood, electric or gas. I, my-self, have for the last twenty-five years used a wood fire in everything from a barrel, to a washpot, to a high dollar pit. I still say you can cook as good of que in anything as long as you watch your fire. What you want is a good stead low fire with a temperature of 200 to 225 deg.

5) Cooking: Well, I have found that I do better with my brisket if I cook it about an hour per pound on a good low fire of hardwood and then wrap it in foil and put it in a dry ice chest for up to eight hours. If I slow cook my brisket for 18 to 20 hours, they are always too dry for me. But remember, any ol' boy can be like the blind dog and find a better way to do it. Good smoke will have a sweet flavor & that's what you want; not a bitter flavor. You will get a (smoke) ring of 1/32 to 1/2 inch most time. The smoke ring is the result of a chemical reaction between smoke & Air (nitrogen). This don't make a big difference in the taste of your brisket but do make a better looking brisket, different seasoning will make a difference in the size of your ring.

6) Presentation: Last, but not to be overlooked, is the presentation of your brisket. I don't care if it is just for your wife & kids or your mother-in-law or your boss or if you are in a million dollar cook-off, A brisket that is half bad, will become extra good if it is sliced and presented right. Always slice your brisket across the grain of the meat (start on a corner of the flat part). This is very important as it makes it a more palatable & tender slice of meat. Remember, a good BBQ brisket don't need a sauce poured over it, serve it on the side.

Adios: Now that's way we do it up the Paluxy River in the hills of Texas. Think I'll cook some BBQ: Beef that is.

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