



barbecue geography

The word *barbecue* conjures up as many definitions (and spelling variations) as there are people who make and eat it. To some it is an outdoor party; to others, the food cooked on the grill or the actual piece of equipment used to cook food. Whatever definition first comes to mind, the end result is usually a smoky piece of meat with a succulent sauce sitting on a plate waiting to be devoured.

Barbecue is as American as “mom and apple pie,” but have no doubt, there are fierce opinions about which region serves the best barbecue. Geography plays an important role in determining how we come to favor certain sauces (sweet, spicy or tangy); how it’s cooked



seat to beef brisket. Basic seasonings like salt and pepper with a sprinkle of cayenne are the norm. The sauce is a mixture of ketchup, vinegar and meat drippings, usually served on the side in a plastic squeeze bottle. The whole meal is served up on butcher paper with a cup of beans and white bread.

Memphis barbecue features pulled pork sandwiches and ribs. The pork sandwich is made from the pork shoulder that is slow roasted over charcoal, served either with pulled white meat, the chopped crispy outer pieces or a combination of the two. All this is piled on a hamburger bun and topped with slaw. Ribs in any form are often mopped with a medium-bodied, tangy, tomato-based sauce and a layer of dry rub on top.

North Carolina barbecue features pork. The western part of the state prefers pork shoulder, while the eastern half likes to roast the whole hog! The pork is cooked over wood or charcoal and chopped or shredded, guaranteeing the maximum absorption of the thin vinegar and hot pepper-based sauce.

St. Louis barbecue uses a special rib cut – spareribs with the brisket bone removed, but more often it’s the “pork steak” that distinguishes the St. Louis style. One method of preparing “pork steaks” is to slowly grill until done, then simmer, swimming in a pan of sweet-tangy sauce. The result is a tender steak full of flavor. Baked beans, grilled sweet corn and coleslaw complete the menu.

Leftover barbecue is always welcomed as a quick meal. Store any leftovers in the refrigerator up to three days. Leftover pulled pork freezes quite well; store in a zip-tight plastic bag for two to three months. Thaw in the refrigerator, remove from plastic and place in an oven-safe pan. Cover and reheat at 250°F until heated through and internal temperature reaches 165°F.



(over wood or charcoal in pits or on spits); and whether it’s served with a bun or plain white bread. Regional variations all have distinct flavor and meat preferences, with recipes as vast as the Texas landscape.

Texas-style barbecue is for the cowboy in the crowd. Chicken, sausage and pork all take a back

