



TRUE 'CUE NEWS

From the Campaign for Real Barbecue

September 2018

No. 13

New Patron

The latest addition to our distinguished company of [patrons](#) is **Kevin Sandridge**, proprietor of the highly regarded [BBQ Beat podcast](#), which covers the world of barbecue and grilling. Kevin's day job is professor of humanities at Polk State College in Florida.

R.I.P. James Villas

We were sad to hear of the death of [Jim Villas](#). Jim was a champion of Southern cuisine, most especially including the barbecue of his native North Carolina, and one of the Campaign's earliest Patrons. His many honors included a 2011 James Beard Award for his book *Pig: King of the Southern Table*. He will be missed.



Launch of True 'Cue Georgia

The Campaign's Georgia branch is off to a great start, under the direction of Patron Craig Pascoe, assisted by Trae Welborn and Patron Jim Auchmutey. Their ever-growing list of certified 100% wood-cookers can be consulted [here](#). In addition, they have set up a website, [Georgia BBQ Trails](#), devoted to the Peach State's barbecue restaurants and traditions.

Auchmutey wrote a nice piece in [Atlanta Magazine](#) about the Campaign with the title, "If you don't exclusively use wood to smoke your meat, is it still true barbecue?" (Blame the magazine, not the author, for the fact that the unwieldy title is somewhat misleading. We'll say it [again](#): We honor those who cook old-style, but theirs is not the only "real barbecue." We call "faux 'cue" only meat cooked with no wood at all.)



True 'Cue decal goes up at Lovie's BBQ, Atlanta. (Left to right, Harold Marshall, Beverly Davis, and Nate Newman.)

More News from Georgia



If you're anywhere near Atlanta before October 2019, be sure to take in the Atlanta History Center's great "[Barbecue Nation](#)" exhibition. Patrons Pascoe and Auchmutey had a hand in putting it together, and it is well worth the \$20 price of admission.

Consult the website for a list of related special events: one you've missed already was a Juneteenth talk and demo by Patron Michael Twitty on African and African American traditions in barbecue. (Incidentally, Michael recently won a James Beard Award for his book, [The Cooking Gene](#).)

Safe Spaces

Perhaps you read about the Oakland woman who [called the police](#) to report that two men were cooking with charcoal in a designated gas-only area. Most coverage played this as a racial story (the woman was white, the men black), but our question is, does Oakland have designated *charcoal-only* areas? If not, why not?

Video Worth Watching

Mainstream America's recent discovery of the Holy Grub (credit: Dennis Rogers) means that barbecue is getting a lot of media attention, of varying quality. A few items worth noting:

In the barbecue episode of the Netflix series "[Ugly Delicious](#)," celebrated chef David Chang and crew go to Texas, California, Illinois, New York, and around the world from Copenhagen to Tokyo, just talking to people. Some of them say interesting things, but Patron Daniel Vaughn's devastating [critique](#) of the end result should be read. Chang did better five years ago in the "[Smoke](#)" episode of "The Mind of a Chef," when he stayed focused on North Carolina, Texas, and Kansas City (where Patron Doug Worgul explained burnt ends).

Another globe-trotting Netflix film, nominated for two James Beard Awards, is titled simply "[Barbecue](#)." Here it's two Australians who are roaming around talking to people. There's lots of grilling going on, but wood-fire does seem to be universally involved.

If you don't feel like checking out international barbecue *in situ*, sit tight: it's coming to you. Tex-Mex fusion, for instance, is well-advanced. Two fine documentaries look at [Valentina's](#), in Austin, and [2M Smokehouse](#) in San Antonio.

Finally, for comic relief, it's hard to beat an oldie but goodie: "[Smoker Simpsons](#)."



The Food of the Future, 1963

At least there's "a mellow drift" of "sweet hickory smoke."

meaty new idea...

RIBS IN A CAN

2½ POUNDS...
ALL SMOKED, SAUCED AND COOKED!

A big 2½ pound can of royally good ribs. No ordinary spareribs—but ribs specially selected, specially cut. Slim in bone—heavy on the good, rich meat.

ALL SMOKED. For meat this good, only the best will do. So we use sweet hickory smoke. A mellow drift.

ALL SAUCED. And this Barbecue Sauce never saw the inside of any bottle. Nine special ingredients in it—six worldly spices.

ALL COOKED. Nothing for you to do but heat. The big 2½ pound can serves 3 to 4. If you're looking for the cheapest ribs, forget ours. If you are hungry for the meatiest—come a-running!

NET WT. CONT. 2½ LBS.
ARMOUR STAR
ribs
WITH BARBECUE SAUCE
FULLY COOKED / READY TO SERVE

Best of the “Best of” Lists

We usually make fun of “best of” lists because they’re usually clueless. But when they’re compiled by people who know what they’re doing they can be good starting places for barbecue pilgrimages (and for arguments). Two recent offerings are worth your attention. Eater.com presents a list of [“The 23 Essential Barbecue Dishes in America”](#) that starts with the whole-hog tray at Ayden, North Carolina’s Skylight Inn and ends with the smoked lamb neck at Little Miss BBQ in Phoenix, while Thrillist.com claims to have found [“The 33 Best BBQ Joints in America”](#)—places that are “continuing America’s grand traditions while also pushing them in exciting new directions.”

These are not bad lists at all. They may (just *may*) unduly reflect the fact that Texans were involved in compiling both of them, but your editor doesn’t see any dish or place that shouldn’t have been included, and can only think of a few deserving examples that weren’t (most from North Carolina, oddly enough). Both lists are a good mix of old-timers and up-and-comers, fundamentalist traditionalists and cheffy innovators, but they have one thing in common. **They all cook with wood or wood coals.** (Most cook *only* with wood or wood coals, and the ones who use hybrid cookers use them so skillfully it’s not obvious which they are.)

The State of Things in the Old North State

Although it seems that wood-cooked barbecue with an eastern North Carolina-style sauce can be found on a Brooklyn [street corner](#), of all places, it is still harder than it should be to find it in North Carolina, and in much of the state it’s getting harder all the time. Jack Cobb BBQ and Son, for instance, a True ‘Cue-certified whole-hog wood-cooker in Farmville, has [closed its doors](#) after nearly fifty years.



But there are some bright spots, new places where you can get proper old-time North Carolina barbecue, even if they’re not old-time North Carolina barbecue restaurants.

For the past couple of years in Whiteville, for instance, Warren Stephens, who comes with a background in Charleston and New Orleans “fine dining,” has been cooking at Big W Barbecue. “No gas here,” he says. “Only wood.” All his pork is from heritage breeds—Duroc, Cheshire, Berkshire, and Mangalitsa—and he’s smoking bacon and sausage in addition to eastern-sauced shoulders and hams.

There's also a new wood-cooking place in Charlotte, [Sweet Lew's](#), where owner Lewis Donald told Patron Kathleen Purvis, "We're not trying to chef it up. We keep it simple. That's what Charlotte needs." True, he's cooking invasive species like brisket, as well as classic North Carolina pork shoulder, but that's Charlotte for you—full of people from elsewhere who have their own ideas about what barbecue is.



Of course, some old places are hanging in there, keeping the vernacular faith. Forty miles from Charlotte, in Shelby, Red Bridges Barbecue Lodge is cooking the barbecue it has always cooked—and nothing else. An [article](#) in *Our State* magazine compares its traditional ways to what goes on at the many branches of Smithfield's Chicken 'N Bar-B-Q (SCNB), North Carolina's leading purveyor of faux 'cue. (*Our State* goes easy on SCNB—perhaps a potential advertiser—but you can read between the lines.)

If the future isn't going to look like Bridges Barbecue Lodge, the Campaign for Real Barbecue wants it to look like Big W or Sweet Lew's, not like SCNB.

Community Barbecues in the Carolinas

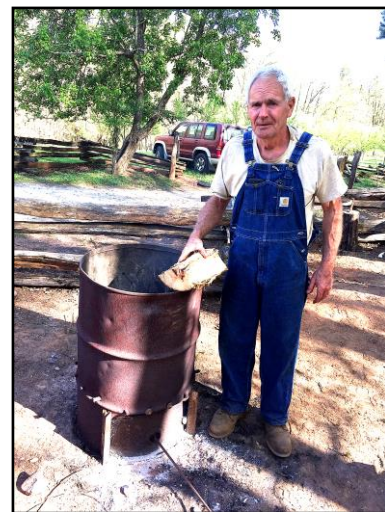
Here in the Carolinas it's not just restaurants that are serving up faux 'cue these days. Used to be that churches, volunteer fire departments, civic clubs, and political parties could be relied on to cook whole hogs or shoulders overnight on cinder block pits if not actually in real ones, dug in the ground.

Now, though, community barbecues are more often than not cooking with gas (literally) and that's pretty sorry. Three churches within ten miles of your editor's house have regular fundraising "barbecues," but all three cook with no wood at all.

So it was cheering to attend a real outdoor pit barbecue at Horne Creek Living Historical Farm in Pinnacle, North Carolina, last April. Let's hope that pit-cooking hogs doesn't become merely a form of historical reenactment, but at least the skills are being passed down. You can watch a video [here](#) that shows Pitmaster Hugh Whitted ("True 'Cue by Hugh") and his volunteer crew turning the hog.

There is talk of making the Horne Creek Farm event an annual one. We need that, and many more like it.

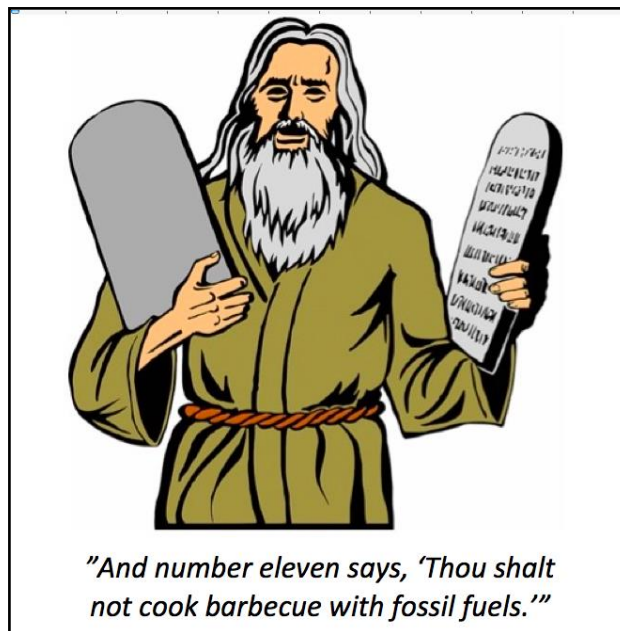
If you know of an event where Real Barbecue is served, please [let us know](#) and we'll post an announcement on our Facebook page.



Hugh Whitted at the burn barrel.

Tragedy in South Carolina

Jackie Hite's Bar-B-Q in Leesville is closing, one more example of a mom-and-pop restaurant folding when the head of the family dies. Mr. Hite, who died two years ago, ran the last place in South Carolina that cooked a whole hog and put it out for customers to pick. Lake High, head of our Campaign's South Carolina branch, says it was the best barbecue in the state. There's a fine documentary by the Southern Foodways Alliance [here](#).



Good News for Jews

The *Times of Israel* reports that a prominent rabbi has [declared](#) that laboratory-grown "pork" should not be considered treyf, since it is not actually meat. If that judgment prevails, it will open up a brave new kosher world of bacon cheeseburgers, pepperoni pizzas—and *wood-cooked pork barbecue!*

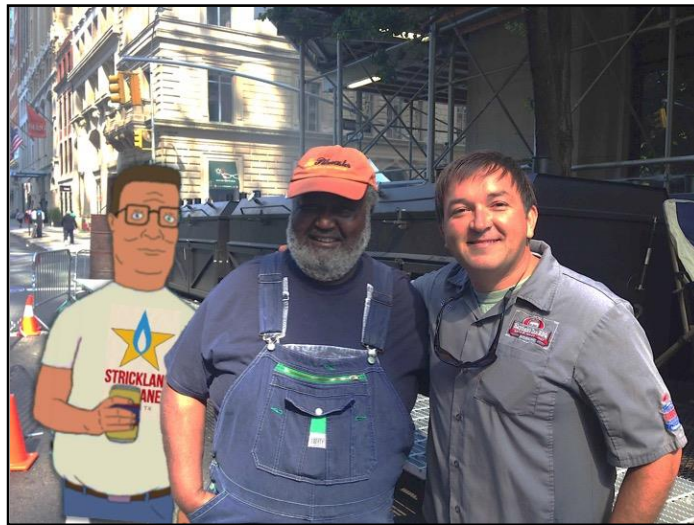
Of course, some folks aren't waiting. Check out [BBQJew.com](#).



The True 'Cue Challenge Still Stands

Four years, four months, and counting.

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The Secret Life of Hank Hill #5

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If you have anything of interest to supporters of Real Barbecue,
please send it along to TrueCue@gmail.com

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