



# TRUE 'CUE NEWS

## From the Campaign for Real Barbecue

June 2017

No. 8

### A Word about the Campaign's Patrons

At last count, 37 of these worthy folks had consented to support the Campaign for Real Barbecue" by lending their names as [Patrons](#). Since they represent a dizzying variety of barbecue traditions, drawn from both Carolinas, Georgia and the Deep South, Kentucky, Memphis, Texas, Kansas City, and elsewhere -- some 15 states and the District of Columbia -- they don't agree about much, but they do all agree that *Real Barbecue is cooked with wood smoke.*

As our website says, our Patrons "are primarily eaters and critics of barbecue, and students of its history and culture." Most cook barbecue at home, many have judged barbecue competitions, and a few have run restaurants, but, to our knowledge, none now competes regularly or cooks barbecue for a living.

This has rankled a few people who *do* cook it for a living. One restaurateur, miffed at what he (mis)took to be disrespect on our part, wrote, "I can assure you that [the True 'Cue folks] are not experts." He dismissed us as "writers, not pitmasters." What we see here, of course, is the age-old tension between creator and critic. Brendan Behan, speaking for the artists, asserted: "Critics are like eunuchs in a harem; they know how it's done, they've seen it done every day, but they're unable to do it themselves." Behan had a point, but we insist that, as Aristotle wrote 2400 years ago, "The diner judges a banquet better than the cook."

Our Patrons are discerning judges. Among them are the barbecue editors of *Texas Monthly* and *Southern Living*, the barbecue columnist for the *Washington Post*, and the authors of definitive books on the barbecue of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Texas, Memphis, and Kansas City. They have written a couple of dozen more books about barbecue and about Southern cuisine more generally, as well as scores of articles in magazines, newspapers, and scholarly journals. Some have produced documentary films, others have collected and archived oral histories, and several maintain thoughtful and informative blogs. They

have received innumerable honors for their work, including a mess of James Beard Awards. We are immensely proud to have their support.

Since the last issue of *True 'Cue News* we have added three more to this distinguished company:

**The Barbecue Bros** -- Speedy, Monk, and Rudy – are originally from High Point, North Carolina, but now live in Nashville, Charlotte, and Austin, respectively, and blog about their barbecue adventures at [Barbecue Bros: Barbecue Travels in North Carolina, Texas, Tennessee, and Beyond](#). This is our first collective “Patron,” and we’re honored to have the Brothers’ collective support.



**Bob Garner** could be called “Mr. North Carolina Barbecue,” except that he’s also “Mr. Livermush,” “Mr. Fish Stew,” “Mr. Moravian Chicken Pie,” and much more. A long-time contributor to North Carolina Public Television, Garner has written four books about the food of his native state, three of them (appropriately) about its barbecue: [North Carolina Barbecue: Flavored by Time](#); [Bob Garner’s Guide to North Carolina Barbecue](#); and [Bob Garner’s Book of Barbecue: North Carolina’s Favorite Food](#).

**Robb Walsh**, a three-time James Beard Journalism Award winner, has written a dozen books about food, including [Barbecue Crossroads: Notes and Recipes from a Southern Odyssey](#) and [Legends of Texas Barbecue](#) (now in its second edition). He is co-founder of [Foodways Texas](#), a non-profit dedicated to preserving Texas food history, which runs a Barbecue Summer Camp at the Texas A&M Meat Science Center. For a sample of Robb’s journalism, check out his discussion of “[7 Dirty Truths of Barbecue](#).” He writes about his decision to join us on his ineffable blog, [Zen BBQ](#).



On the wall at the Original Little Richard’s BBQ, Winston-Salem

## Barbecue Camps

As far as we know, the Foodways Texas [BBQ Summer Camp](#) mentioned above is the oldest such camp in the country, but in 2015 it was joined by one in [North Carolina](#), under the auspices of North Carolina State University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. (Your editor spread the True 'Cue gospel at the 2017 camp.)

We also understand that the Culinary Institute of America offers "boot camps" on "[BBQ and Grilling](#)" at their main campus in Hyde Park, New York, and in San Antonio, but we're not sure about them. The CIA's [introduction](#) to the Holy Grub (thanks to Dennis Rogers for that phrase) does say, "Barbecuing requires smoke to properly flavor and color the food," but [elsewhere](#) the Institute offers instructions for "Slow-Cooker Pulled Pork Barbecue," which is about as faux as you can get.

### The Carolina BBQ League's Good Works

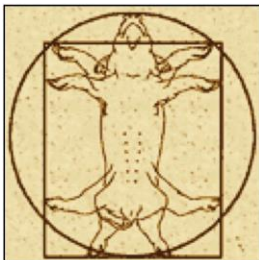


Every year since 1985 the North Carolina Pork Council has honored eastern North Carolina's whole-hog barbecue tradition by sponsoring a series of competitions culminating in the [Whole Hog Barbecue Championship](#). Unfortunately, they have been less faithful to tradition when it comes to heat sources. Not only do the [rules](#) allow gas cookers, the [scoring](#) gives no points for smoky goodness and rewards "appearance." Since wood smoke has a way of discoloring things, it used to be that gassers always won.

We are happy to report that a new organization called the [Carolina BBQ League](#) is taking steps to subvert this trend. The [application form](#) for last spring's BBQ Fest on the Neuse, in Kinston, for instance, let contestants indicate that they would be cooking with wood or charcoal, and the League gave a prize to the team that produced the best of *those*. At Fayetteville's [When Pigs Fly](#) Festival the League sponsored a wood-cooked whole-hog contest, alongside a charade in which people could cook pork butts, ribs, and chickens with any heat source they wanted.

Increasing and shameful nonchalance in the Carolinas about fossil fuels is what led to the formation of the Campaign for Real Barbecue in the first place, and we applaud the League's efforts to arrest this distressing development.

### Hog Heaven



Anyone who likes to look at pigs as well as eat them needs to check out a website called [Porkopolis.org](#), where Daniel E. Schultz, "Editor, Curator, and Swineherd," has assembled "a single-minded bestiary, . . . a collection of arts, literature, philosophy and other varied considerations of the pig."

Words are inadequate to describe this remarkable archive.

### Cultural Appropriation

Brother Jimmy's BBQ near Madison Square Garden, like many other citified Yankee barbecue places, seeks to project a small-town Southern vibe. But when an Alabama friend stopped in and asked if Jimmy was there, the waiter said "Who?"

## More on “Big City Barbecue”

In our [last issue](#) we discussed the phenomenon that Patron Daniel Vaughn has labeled “[big city barbecue](#),” and talked about the Atlanta scene, which exemplifies it, but there is much more to be said on the subject.

Start with Patron Jim Shahin’s recent, must-read [column](#) in the *Washington Post* entitled “This is the Future of Barbecue: No Regions, No Rules, Lots of Innovation.” Then check out Charles Passy’s *Wall Street Journal* article, “Move Over Texas, N.Y. Is Rustling Up Some Top-Notch Barbecue” (the headline evoked many derisive comments), which makes the point, with New York examples, that one can introduce barbecue to urban sophisticates by going (1) “unabashedly traditional,” (2) “full-throttle gourmet,” or (3) fusion, incorporating, e.g., Jamaican or Vietnamese influences. The one thing all these places have in common is New York prices. (The *Journal* is pay-walled, but try this [link](#).) Passy contends that, for better or worse, New York, like Atlanta, “is creating its own barbecue identity—albeit an identity that doesn’t hew to any particular school or philosophy. Each place is its own thing—or, in some cases, several things.” (By the way, it’s hard to take seriously a place that says it cooks “smoke-centric comfort food.”)

A few more relevant links:

Jim Shahin’s column on the barbecue of [Charleston](#) -- “chef-inspired, upscale – and the future.”

Patron Robert Moss’s [Charleston BBQ tour](#) supports Shahin’s characterization.

The *Washington Post*’s list of DC’s “[ten best](#)” places for barbecue suggests that Washington’s scene is similar.

A [heartening D.C. story](#): A pitmaster obliged by his insurance company to install a Southern Pride cooker swears he will use gas for ignition only.

Jim Shahin’s column on the [contributions of recent immigrant cultures](#) to the American barbecue scene.



Centerpiece at Motto, Durham  
(photo by Ray Pulley)

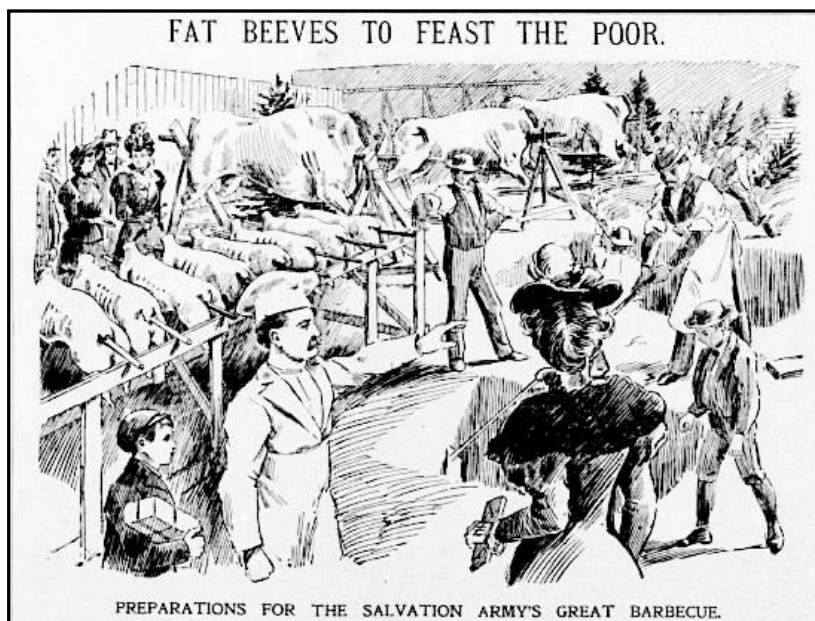
For what it’s worth, your editor generally prefers what could be called “vernacular barbecue,” but confesses that he has had two sublime meals at [Motto](#), in Durham, where Chef Garret Fleming cures his own meats for an astonishing, ever-changing charcuterie platter, and lays on the occasional “Barbecue Day” to serve (relatively) more traditional fare.

When Fleming deconstructs whole hogs he makes a point of using the entire critter, including the skull (left).



## True 'Cue in San Francisco, 1898

“Three dressed beeves [and] eight plump sheep” spitted and pit-cooked for a New Year’s Day charity dinner:



( From the *San Francisco Call*, January 1, 1898.)

### The True 'Cue North Carolina Challenge: A Reminder

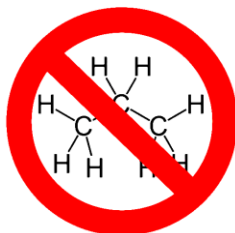
In over three years, no one has identified (1) any statute or regulation that forbids any barbecue restaurant in North Carolina to cook with wood or charcoal, or (2) any official – federal state, county, or municipal – who has made a North Carolina restaurant stop cooking with wood or charcoal, or who has forbidden one to start. If you can do so, you’ll win a “No Faux 'Cue” apron, a True 'Cue ball cap, and a barbecue sandwich from Allen & Son, in Chapel Hill.

**Please forward this newsletter to anyone you know who might be interested.**

Earlier issues of *True 'Cue News* can be found on-line [here](#).

You can also follow us on [Facebook](#).

If you have anything of interest to supporters of Real Barbecue—old places closing or turning to gas, new places opening, obituaries of barbecue legends, whatever—please send it along to [TrueCue@gmail.com](mailto:TrueCue@gmail.com).



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