



Journey through Thyme

Jodi Schneider
Columnist

The season of the barbecue

There's nothing more American than a backyard barbecue.

Memorial Day weekend typically marks the start of summer when grilling in the backyard is a great way to cook during the warm season. It's a time to break out the apron and tongs, fire up the gas or charcoal and listen to the sweet sizzle of a steak and corn on the cob.

Barbecue, according to research done by *The Smithsonian*, began during the Colonial Era in Virginia. Colonists observed Native Americans smoking and drying meats over an open flame. Then, the British settlers put their own spin on it with basting, using mostly butter or vinegar, to keep the meat moist while grilling over an open flame. Years later, as slaves from the Caribbean were brought to the U.S., they also brought their own flavors, spices, and techniques.

Thus, barbecue was born. A barbecue can refer to

the cooking method itself. Although barbecuing and grilling both refer to cooking food outdoors over a heat source, they aren't interchangeable terms for the same cooking technique. Yet, the terms barbecuing and grilling are often treated as synonymous; it is more precise to say that barbecuing is a type of grilling. The most important aspects that differentiate the two are the type of heat used and the total cook time.

The term barbecuing refers to cooking meat low and slow, either on a grill or in a smoker. Traditionally, with barbecue, you often have large, bone-in cuts such as ribs, pork shoulder, pork butt or brisket. The cooking is done over indirect heat (away from the flame) for at least a few hours and often the entire day, until the meat is very tender and falling off the bone.

Trails End BBQ Company proprietor Carl Perry of Sisters knows how to cook meat low and slow and used his expert barbecue skills a few years ago in the San Juan Bautista Rib Cook-off and won first place in both ribs and sauce.

Perry cooks the ribs in his smokers for four hours and before he serves the tenderized meat, the racks are put on a grill for about five minutes to caramelize the sauce.

Perry's barbecue career kicked off accidentally when a friend needed him to step up and barbecue ribs at the Deschutes County Fair in 2001. He bought one of his friend's smokers and had been serving up ribs at Sisters Rodeo and the Deschutes County Fair for years.



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER

What we call barbecue is really "grilling." Outdoor cooking has a rich and multicultural history in the Americas.

Grilling is what you're likely doing more often: cooking food quickly over direct heat at high temperatures. Grilling is hot and fast and gives food a quick sear. If you're cooking seafood, steak, hamburgers, hot dogs, sausages, pork chops, or boneless chicken breasts, chances are you're grilling. Vegetables and fruits are also popular foods to grill. At-home grilling is most often done over a gas or charcoal grill.

The bottom line: barbecue is not grilling. It's not flipping burgers, searing a steak, chicken or ribs with barbecue sauce. It's cooking over low heat for hours. Barbecue is more than a technique, it's an experience.

A favorite American pastime and a summer tradition for many, barbecues have a long and surprisingly patriotic history.

The word barbecue comes from the language of a Caribbean Indian tribe called the Taino. Their word for grilling on a raised wooden grate is barbacoa. The word first appeared in print in a Spanish explorer's account of the West Indies in 1526.

Since then, the popularity of barbecues has spread like wildfire. The history of barbecuing in America dates to colonial times, and it has been a part of American culture ever since.

Our presidents were known to be big fans of the laid-back pastime as well. George Washington's diaries abound with references to barbecues, including one that lasted for three days.

When Abraham Lincoln's parents were married, their wedding feast was a barbecue. Along the way, famous inventors left their mark on the American barbecue: the first commercial charcoal

briquet factory was designed by Thomas Edison and built by Henry Ford in 1921.



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