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By **Erik R. Trinidad** | June 13, 2012

ALL FIRED UP: MEAT SMOKING 101

“Smoke accentuates things very well,” says chef Shane McBride, a renowned chef whose culinary talents have graced the kitchens of some of New York’s most prestigious restaurants. I caught up with him on his way home from a world championship barbecue competition to ask him a thing or two about his techniques of smoking meat.

“When you’re cooking a piece of barbecue, whether it’s a brisket or a shoulder or a whole hog or ribs, those are all tough preps,” says McBride. “It takes time and effort to make it taste good. And that’s kind of the essence of what barbecue is.”

Step 1: Select Your Cut

The cut you choose can determine how you’re going to flavor it, be it a marinade injection or liberal use of dry rub. “We have a different type of dry rub for everything that we barbecue, whether it’s chicken or pork or beef,” says McBride. “The flavors that you’re trying to pull out of those pieces of meat — especially between brisket or pork ribs or short rib — are really different. You really want to accentuate the meat flavor, and it takes different spices, salt, or sugar to pull that out.” Generally, beef calls for saltier rubs and marinades, and pork calls for sweeter flavors, but it’s all up to you to come up with your own secret formula.

Step 2: Light Your Fire

Once flavored appropriately, the meat goes to the spit burner, over a smoking fire of burning hickory and apple wood, for anywhere from four hours (for ribs) or twenty (for a whole hog).

Step 3: Sauce and Slather

Saucing comes near the end. McBride prefers using a homemade barbecue sauce — except on brisket, which he prefers to leave natural.

Step 4: Experiment

Shane continues to branch out in his quest to fully master the art of barbecue. (Next on his agenda? Duck neck — something with plenty of fat.) And yet, while there are many interesting cuts of meat that can be smoked, not everything is smokable. “The most interesting thing that I’ve smoked is the buffalo brisket,” McBride told me. “It turned out awful.[...]When you’re cooking something for a long period of time, you need to have fat in it — and that piece of meat had very little fat in it. It dried out.”

Step 5: Slow and Steady

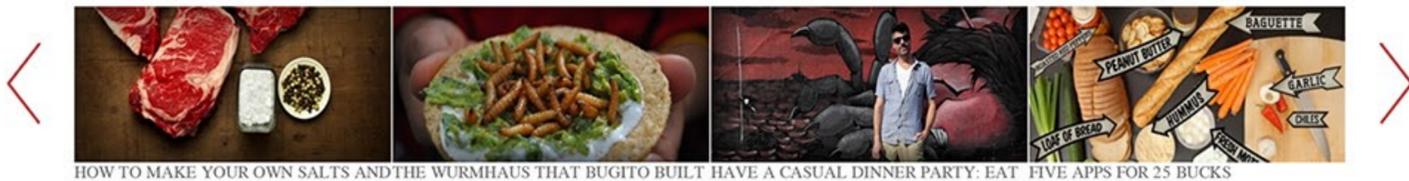
“Be patient and don’t overthink it,” McBride advises anyone learning how to smoke meat. “It’s sort of a long, drawn-out cooking process. It’s a good time to have a couple friends over and drink a couple of beers... That’s definitely a very important part of it. While you’re smoking meat, there’s definitely beer involved.”

Beer and barbecue? Now that’s a good way to make long hours of cooking more interesting.

Erik Trinidad is an author, writer, designer, food critic, world traveler, and all-around "Freelance Renaissance Man," whose work can be seen on The Huffington Post, Food Network/Cooking Channel, and Discovery.com, as well as on his own travel and food sites, [The Global Trip](#) and [Fancy Fast Food](#). Follow him on Twitter [@theglobaltrip](#) and [@fancyfastfood](#); on [facebook.com/theglobaltrip](#) and [facebook.com/fancyfastfood](#); [youtube.com/theglobaltrip](#) and [youtube.com/fancyfastfood](#) and at "[theglobaltrip](#)" on Instagram.

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