



## Crossing Borders with Barbecue

Want to add variety to your menu? Fire up the grill or the smoker (or just push a button on the microwave or combi) and try serving barbecue. It's among the most regionalized styles of cooking in the United States, and you can add a little pizzazz by serving it in its many different guises. While beef and pork are traditional, chicken, seafood and even vegetarian items are getting the barbecue treatment with great results.

When it comes to meat, Don McCullough, executive vice president of the National Barbecue Association in Austin, TX, says pork chops, butts and shoulders are Southeast staples; beef and brisket are predominant in the Southwest; and tri-tips (the end cut of sirloin) are popular in California.

Pork has always been a staple in the south and is usually eaten chopped. As you travel west, you're more likely to find the pork "pulled," which is slow-cooked and then shredded.

As for sauces, says McCullough, in the center of the country people prefer thicker tomato-based sauces with their barbecued meat; in the south and southeast vinegar-based sauces are popular; mustard sauces are a favorite in the east and North Carolina; Californians like teriyaki-style barbecue sauce.

But boundaries are blurring, he says. "I see the regional differences moving out of the regions because when people move, they want what they had at home." The upshot? Foodservice operators have a lot of options to play with, and it's tough to go wrong.

Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN, runs a barbecue restaurant called C.T. West. The menu is pretty traditional, says executive chef Camp Howard, and meats range from brisket to chicken. "Barbecue means different things to people so I tried not to regionalize too much. I came up with smoked meats, that don't fit any particular style."

Howard also serves three sauces: a vinegar-based Carolina-style sauce; a sweeter Memphis-style sauce; and a spicier chipotle sauce, the C.T. West sauce, which is the favorite, he says.

Foodservice contractor Aramark has implemented its Smokehouse BBQ concept at many campus accounts, including Trinity University in San Antonio, TX. The basic menu there includes Carolina pulled pork and St. Louis-style ribs. Sides are simple: potato salad, coleslaw, ranch beans, creamed corn and pickled jalapenos. There are dry rubs made of different spices and at least six different barbecue sauces, ranging from Carolina gold to Kansas City style and a spicy Texas sauce.

"Students are looking for traditional barbecue and more unusual items such as trout, quail, portabellas, leg of lamb and hot smoked salmon," said executive chef Miguel Ardid. There's also the Ultimate Baked Potato, a fully loaded smoked potato topped with the chopped barbecue meat of the day. "It keeps the concept fresh and interesting," says Ardid.

Need some ideas for great, easy-to-menu barbecue dishes? Start with Foodservice Rewards<sup>®</sup> Sponsors like **Hormel**, which offers Austin Blues<sup>®</sup> fully cooked ribs, pulled pork and Saucy Blues<sup>®</sup> BBQ, and **Nestle Foodservices**<sup>®</sup>, for on-trend sauces like Minor's Latin Style BBQ Guava Mole Sauce.

### **Tips for Good — and Safe — Barbecuing**

- Fully defrost meat and poultry in the refrigerator for slow, safe thawing. It can be defrosted in the microwave if it is to be cooked immediately.
- Marinate meat or poultry for several hours to tenderize and/or add flavor. Marinate in the refrigerator. If the marinade is to be used as a sauce, as well, reserve a portion before the protein is added to avoid cross-contamination. If the marinade that was used for raw meat is to be reused, bring it to a boil first to destroy any harmful bacteria.
- Precooking food either in the microwave or conventionally can reduce grilling time. However, meat must be placed on the preheated barbecue grill immediately to complete the cooking.
- To prevent flare-ups and thus charring, cut visible fat from meats or cook meat in the microwave to release some juices. Meats should also be cooked in the center of the grill, with the coals at the sides so juices and fat do not drip on them.
- Take the skin membrane off the backside of ribs to enhance their flavor