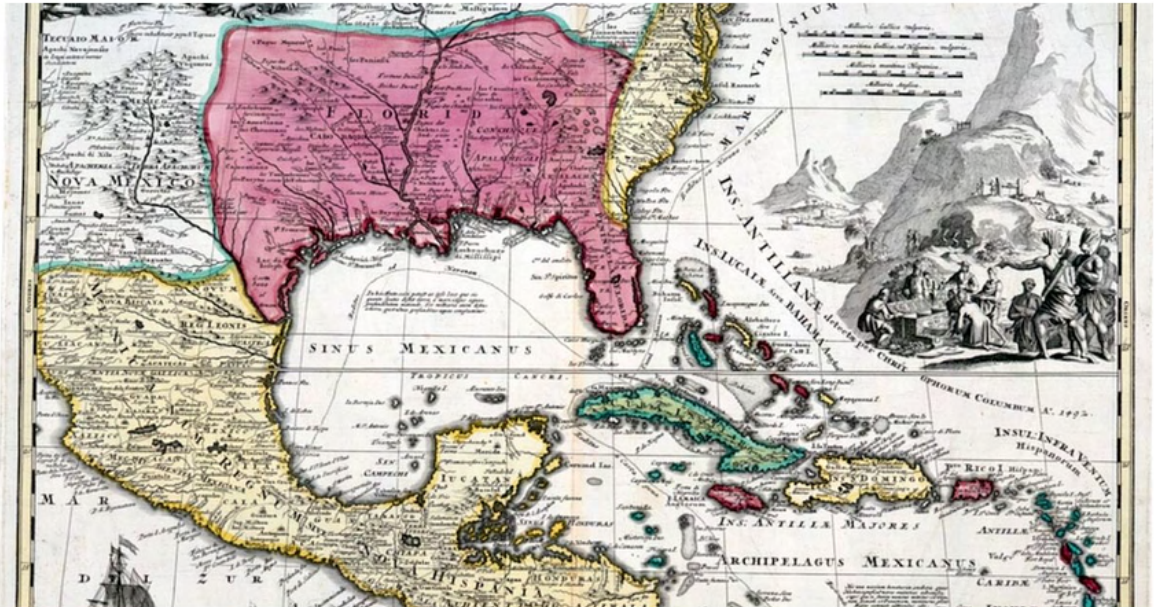


7 Main Regional American BBQ Styles You Must Try!

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Barbecue is a truly unique cuisine, and even just the word gets most of us excited. However, say the word “barbecue” to someone, and they’re going to assume you’re talking about a version of BBQ that may not be the same as yours. Someone from Texas will likely think of something different than someone from Georgia.

If you’ve ever wondered how barbecue styles differ from state to state and region to region, read on to discover the unique trademarks of each area’s unique BBQ style!

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The History of Barbecue in America

Barbecues are a wonderful way to gather family and friends, bonding over delicious food, and basking in the sun. But if American barbecue all happens in one country, why does it differ so drastically from state to state?

The flavors and cooking styles of barbecued meat have been notably influenced by colonial immigrants. The original styles of barbecue came from the easternmost colonies, and feature things like vinegar-based “whole hog” cooking styles of Virginia and North Carolina. The idea of gradually adding sauce to the cooking meat (or basting) was brought to the US by British colonists and helped preserve the meat’s juices.

South Carolina saw a large influx of German and French people, whose cooking incorporated mustard-based sauces. This was almost inevitable, considering how much of a fixture mustard is in both German and French cuisines.

From the Atlantic to the Gulf exists an area known as the “barbecue belt.” This zone houses several distinct barbecue traditions, including but not limited to Carolina, Memphis, Texas, and Kansas City. The history of American barbecue is exciting, diverse, and rich, showing the path from the Caribbean cooking style brought north by the Spanish, then westward by immigrants, and seasoned with European flavors along the way.

It’s important to note the history of each dish we enjoy at a family cookout. It gives us context and insight into the fascinating history of American barbecue. Let’s look at the more specific American styles, region by region.



Carolina-Style BBQ

Carolina-style barbecue is one of America’s oldest and most popular, and for good reason. Carolina barbecue’s primary meat is pork that is typically shredded, pulled, or chopped. This well-known barbecue category is split into two categories: Eastern-style and Lexington-style.

Eastern-style may involve preparing and cooking any part of the pig, provided it’s topped with a thick, mayonnaise-based sauce. Lexington-style barbecue uses a sauce made with ketchup, vinegar, and sometimes liquid smoke.



Kentucky-Style BBQ

Kentucky is most famous for mutton served with a dip, made with a Worcestershire-based sauce. Both the meat and the sauce it is served with are popular in western Kentucky, but pork is just as popular in eastern Kentucky, particularly the shoulder. This barbecue pork style usually comes with the same vinegar-based sauce that is popular in North Carolina and western Tennessee.



Texas-Style BBQ

As with Carolina-style barbecue, Texas barbecue is split into four categories: East, West, South, and Central Texas. The most popular Texas-style barbecue option is the classic barbacoa, which originated in the Caribbean. This cooking method made its way to Mexico and later Texas, and uses lamb, goat, or beef, slow-cooked in a fire pit.





Kansas City-Style BBQ

Kansas City-style barbecue usually features sauces with tomato and molasses bases. While the Carolina barbecue style relies mainly on pork, Kansas City-style often involves a wider range of meats, including beef and even lamb. These meats are dry-rubbed, placed into the barbecue pit smoker, and served with sweet, thick sauces on the side.



Memphis-Style BBQ

Memphis barbecue is a very rub-heavy barbecue style, leaning into both dry and wet rubs. The wet rubs are doused in a sauce before being placed in the smoker, whereas dry rubs involve rubbing the meat with various seasonings. Regardless of the type of rub, Memphis-style meat (typically pork shoulder) is cooked low-and-slow for that classic fall-off-the-bone texture. Memphis-style barbecued meat is also extremely versatile- you can find it on anything, from sandwiches and salads to pizza and even pasta!





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Georgia-Style BBQ

The barbecue style of the Peach State is often debated, with some people of the opinion that Georgia doesn't even have its own distinct barbecue style. Others argue that to get the true Georgia flavor, you must venture outside of Atlanta as it is home to many cosmopolitan restaurants. Georgia-style barbecue incorporates elements from its neighbors, and although many Georgia barbecue places offer ribs and chicken, pork is the most popular meat. Pitmasters typically cook pork shoulders or entire pigs over hickory or oak, and this meat is served with a red tomato-based concoction that can vary in thickness, spiciness, and sweetness, depending on where you go.



Alabama-Style BBQ

Alabama-style barbecue is similar to Memphis-style barbecue in that it focuses on pork shoulder. But instead of rubs, Alabama turns to tangy sauces instead. Barbecues in Alabama tend to use tomato-based sauces, but this state is also the home of the famous white barbecue sauce, which is tangy, creamy, and peppery. It's made with mayonnaise, mustard, vinegar, brown sugar, and the most unusual ingredient: horseradish.

American barbecue is more than just food – it's culture, too. It brings people together, with the common desire to enjoy some delicious food and spend time together. It's also a great way to acknowledge the country's rich history, and whenever we enjoy our favorite pulled pork sandwich or plate of ribs, we celebrate America's diverse and unique cuisine!



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