

BT's Smokehouse: Meat. It's what's for dinner

Written by staff

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376 Main St., Sturbridge • 508-344-6537 • btsmokehouse.com

By Zeke Williams



Go ahead. Take a few minutes to repeat that word to yourself. Meat. Meat. Meat. Forget those commercials telling you how to gauge the beginning of summer. All you need to know about the start to summer is in the smoky waft coming from a barbecue.

In order to take in an appropriate Southern-style barbecue, you'd hop on a plane to Austin, Memphis or Kansas City for a chance to experience some of the finest portions of smoked meats in the country. Taylor, Wayne and I decided to take a trip south to do just that ... all the way to BT's Smokehouse in Sturbridge.

It should be stressed that BT's is not meant to be a true sit-down dining experience. The shack-like store, whose seating consists of a single picnic table in the parking lot of a series of stores, is not the most scenic location — as is the second BT's location in Brimfield.

FOOD ★★★★★1/2 AMBIENCE ★☆☆☆☆ SERVICE ★★★★★☆ VALUE ★★★★★1/2

Forget the candles and background music — unless you enjoy car alarms. That said, we are here for the food first and foremost.

The meats at BT's are slow-cooked on sight inside a small custom-made smoker for 14 hours in true Southern barbecue tradition to allow the natural, well, awesomeness of the meats to be retained. Local applewood draws out even more flavor with a delicate smokiness that would make a great candle scent.

Each is prepared Memphis-style, which means a vinegar-based dry rub is lightly coated during the slow-cooking process. BT's offers a half dozen sauces to pair with an order — which are all also vinegar-based — that run the gamut of spiciness from mild BBQ to extreme BT Heat.

Wayne ordered the pulled pork sandwich, which had an ample portion of delicate meat that fell apart on contact. A dry rub was applied lightly to the pork, which was pressed inside a soft bulkie roll. Sauces were unnecessary to enhance the profile of the meat.

And then there was the brisket sandwich.

No colorful words are required here. Best. Brisket. Ever. The server, who was very helpful throughout the meal, carved generous cuts of meat into a bulkie roll. The first bite was of the burnt ends of the brisket — the area where flavor is at a maximum. I nearly fell off the picnic table. With the same light seasoning that graced the pulled pork, brisket pieces melted apart.

If the meat was any more tender it could be considered a liquid.

Taylor ordered a rack of ribs, which we packed up and heated at her homestead. The meat once again fell off the bone with great ease. The dry rub worked best on the ribs.

We each ordered sides with our meals. The cornbread was moist, and an order of cole slaw boasted crispy strands of cabbage mixed with shredded carrots in a seasoned sauce that continued BT's vinegary theme. Potato salad featured the same tasty sauce wrapping itself around peppery redskin potatoes that were dashed with chives.

With water and two sodas added to wash down the meal, the bill came to \$40.91. Cookies were available for dessert, but we decided to allow the sweet smell of applewood to linger instead.

Of course, it was not just the aroma of Southern barbecue I was taking home with me, it was the signal of summer's birth in 2009. Savoring meat like this was my way to properly kick off the warm-weather season. o

