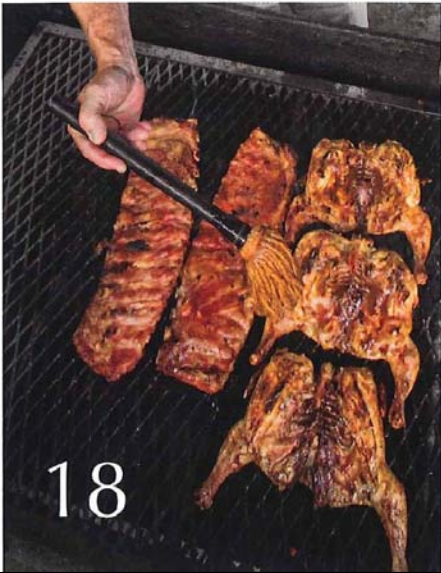


FLAVORS

Atlanta's
Dining
Scene

FOOD • CULTURE • DINING • WINE • ENTERTAINING • HOME

TABLE OF CONTENTS FEATURES



18

FLAVORS

Atlanta's
Dining
Scene

FOOD • CULTURE • DINING • WINE • ENTERTAINING • HOME

Fall 2011 • vol:35

Toasty and Tasty

FOOD

Up in Smoke

Atlanta's pit masters share the keys to great 'cue.

18

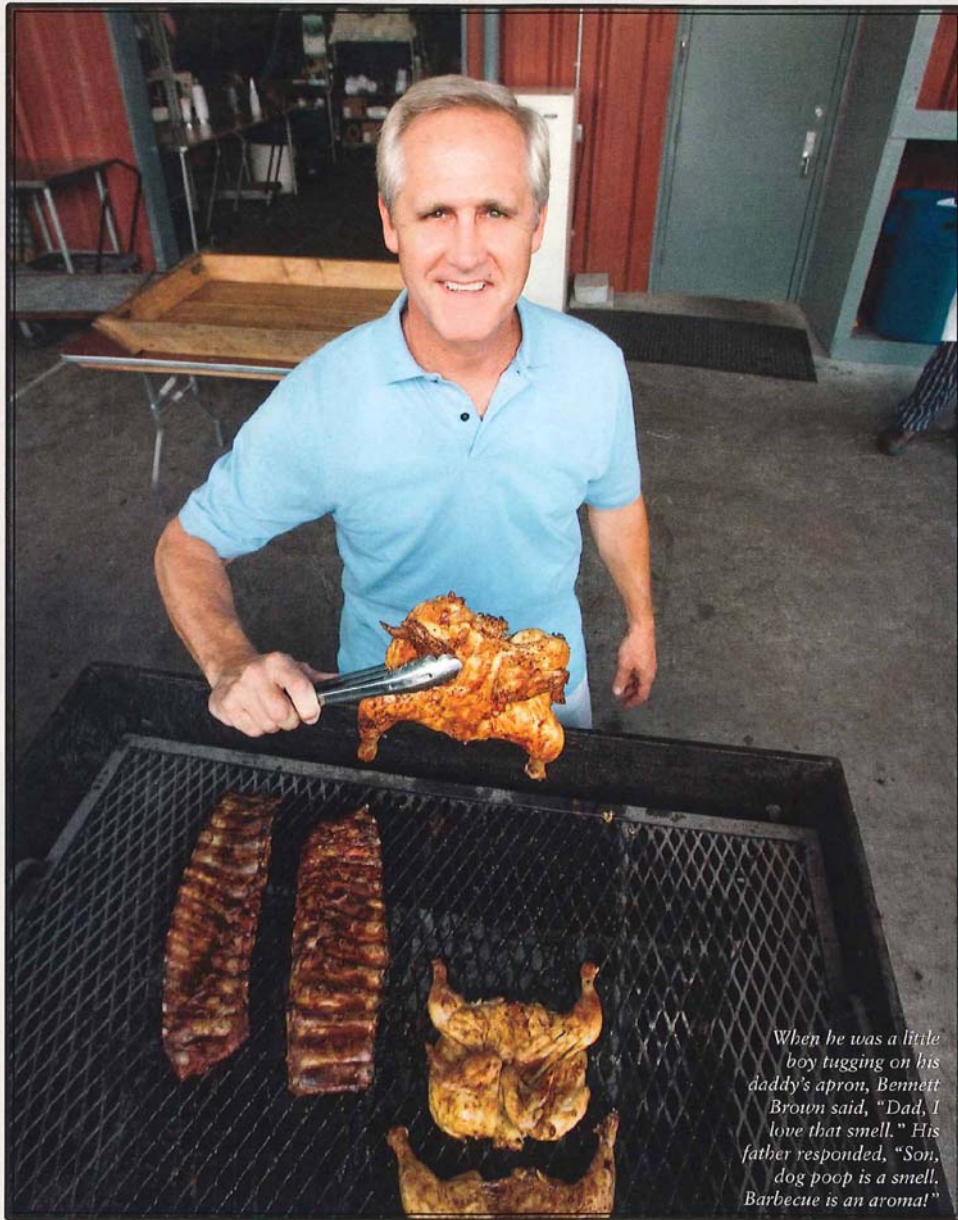
FALL 2011 \$4.95

[editorial]



[The Reynolds Group Inc.] [www.thereynoldsgroupinc.com]

UP IN SMOKE



When he was a little boy tugging on his daddy's apron, Bennett Brown said, "Dad, I love that smell." His father responded, "Son, dog poop is a smell. Barbecue is an aroma!"

ATLANTA'S PIT MASTERS SHARE THE KEYS TO GREAT 'CUE

WRITTEN BY SHELLEY SKILES SAWYER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN HAIGWOOD, HAIGWOOD STUDIOS

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY since the Spaniards bumped into our coast, bringing along pigs and wine that had turned into vinegar. That first smoked swine doused with a sauce of peppers, oyster juice and sherry vinegar has morphed into a religion of sorts — one that sparks debates, saucy salvos, chest puffing, and downright bone slinging. Beef or pork, vinegar or tomato, slow or fast — it all boils down to smoky skirmishes often fueled with beer. But protein cooked over coals has a place in every culture. It's safe to assume the cave man came first. After that, it's anybody's guess. Seems like the best thing to do is come together at the table, shut up and eat. To whet the appetite and give you tips you can use in your own cave, we sought out some of the area's prized pit masters.

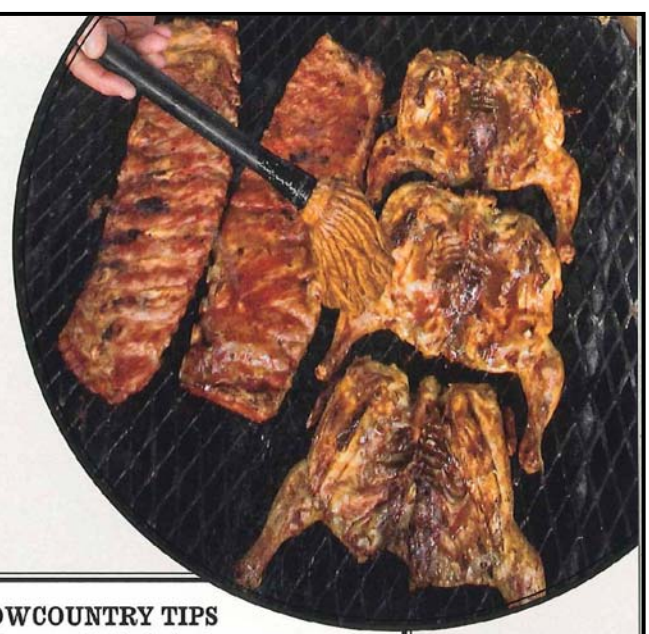
LOWCOUNTRY BARBECUE

When Bennett Brown talks about barbecue, his blue eyes sparkle. The founder of 26-year-old LowCountry Barbecue catering has parlayed a family tradition and time-tested recipes into a labor of love that has folks licking their chops from the roof of the IBM building to as far away as The Netherlands. Needless to say, Brown has plenty of opinions about this “sacred” subject. “The art of barbecuing is knowing how much charcoal to use, where to position it, how far to put what you're cooking from the coals, when to turn it over, when to sauce it — even the weather affects what you're doing,” he says. “Part of the theater is watching the pit master do his magic. It's like playing chess, unlike with those large commercial smokers, which we don't use for chicken and ribs. With those you can put the ribs in and go take a nap.” (See what we mean?)

His most passionate opinion concerns the sauce. His company's 70-plus-year-old, vinegar-based sauce is a treasured family secret that originated in West Africa more than 300 years ago. Family friend and Gullah native “Mose” passed his people's recipe along to Brown's great-aunt. “It's a thin sauce that we spoon on delicately throughout the cooking process,” Brown says. “It gets into the meat and makes for a moister product. Ketchup-heavy sweet sauces don't penetrate the meat; they just overpower it.”

SEASONING A NEW CHARCOAL GRILL

To season a new grill, LowCountry's Bennett Brown loads it up with charcoal. Once the coals are just turning gray, he spreads them out and tops them with hardwood chips. “Place your grilling rack onto the grill and cover the entire cooking surface with thick-sliced bacon,” he says. “Open the bottom vents entirely and the top vents halfway.” The grease from the bacon will season the cooking surface, while the smoke produced from the drippings on top of the coals will season the inside of the grill.



LOWCOUNTRY TIPS

- Get a mop! A big, fat basting brush makes the job easier.
- When cooking ribs, if you choose to leave the membrane on, lightly salt the ribs and cut a tiny slit between each one on the bone side so the sauce can penetrate the meat better.



For super-moist corn the LowCountry way, cut off the top 2 inches from the ear to remove the silks (if there are any) and remove the outer leaves of the husk down to the fresh green leaves. Simmer corn for 30 minutes. Remove and drain. Run under cold water as you pull back the husk. Wrap a napkin around the husk, dip corn into melted butter and salt and pepper to taste.

[editorial]



[The Reynolds Group Inc.] [www.thereynoldsgroupinc.com]

"At LowCountry, we barbecue whole chickens over hickory charcoal," says Bennett Brown. "To serve the most delicious, moist barbecued chicken possible, it is best to use the whole bird to ensure that the meat retains its natural juices." It's also a good idea to barbecue more chickens than you need for delicious leftovers.



Recipes by Bennett A. Brown III, Owner/CEO, LowCountry Barbecue

LowCountry's Barbecued Chicken

Yield: 1 whole chicken

- 1 whole chicken, 3 to 3 1/2 pounds
- salt and pepper to taste
- vinegar-based barbecue sauce*

Butterfly chicken by cutting down the breastbone. This will allow you to lay the bird out flat on its back. Trim away excess fat around the neck and tail, and clean out the bile area at the bottom of the chicken. Rinse chicken thoroughly with cold water, pat dry and lightly salt and pepper front and back of bird.

Most non-commercial charcoal grill racks are set at a height of 8 inches from the charcoal. If possible, adjust your grill rack height so it sets 10 to 12 inches from the charcoal. Once the coals are lit and have burned down until they are turning gray, spread them evenly and place the cooking rack onto the grill. Brush off the rack and coat with oil. Place chicken, rib side down, onto the grill and cover. Vent the top and bottom of the grill to ensure that the coals will burn evenly and slowly.** Depending upon the grill's cooking temperature and the rack's distance from the coals, the chicken should be turned after 45 minutes. Once turned, begin to baste the bird with sauce. Cook an additional 30 to 45 minutes, basting often, or until tender. Remove chicken from the grill, cut into quarters, sauce and serve.

*LowCountry Barbecue's Vinegar Based Sauce, made from their secret family recipe, is widely available. If you want to try your hand at making your own, Brown has shared another family recipe with Flavors that is similar to the original.

**The cooker will be hotter (about 350 degrees) when the bird first goes on and will eventually drop to approximately 250 degrees, depending upon how you vent it.

FLAVORS ONLINE

Go to flavorsmagazine.com for Brown's family recipe for smoked chicken salad.

LowCountry Carolina-Style Vinegar-Based Barbecue Sauce

Yield: about 1/2 gallon

- 2 quarts apple cider vinegar
- 1 quart ketchup
- 6 ounces beer, any kind
- 1/2 cup fine ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons white sugar
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1/2 tablespoon cayenne pepper

In a large pot, bring vinegar to a boil. Stir in ketchup and beer and bring mixture to a simmer. Slowly stir in black pepper, sugar, salt and cayenne pepper. Continue to simmer, uncovered, for at least 1 hour, stirring often. Any excess sauce can be refrigerated for a later use.



LowCountry Barbecue, Inc.
404/352-1121
lowcountrybbq.com

[editorial]



[The Reynolds Group Inc.] [www.thereynoldsgroupinc.com]