

The Great Coastal Texas BBQ Trail

McMillan's Bar-B-Q

Louis McMillan

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Transcribed by Joel Novosad.

What date was your place established?

Have been in the barbecue business for about 45 years, but has been at the current location in Fannin, TX for 27 years. Started catering business in 1973.

If customers are going to get ONE item at your restaurant, what should it be?

"Brisket is the hype, everyone is looking for brisket", "Brisket to [pork] ribs"

What was the most difficult decision you've made during your time operating the business?

Went to Washington and cooked at the Smithsonian for the Folklife Festival. Cooked for so many people. Over a million people came through there and "everyone is looking for barbecue," and they were the only Texas barbecue there. May have served 350,000 people in 10 days. Was the coordinator for his whole service.

What's one secret you're willing to share about the barbecue business?

"Everybody has their own secret", but "there's no secret to barbecue!"

"You gotta do it with love! Love what you do and do what you love!"

"Only seasonings you need are salt and pepper!"

The best wood to cook with is cherry wood. Hard to get in Texas so another fruit wood would be a good substitute (peach, plum). Soft burning wood and a flavoring wood. Mesquite is a strong wood and can take over.

What makes your barbecue special? Why would a customer come to you instead of another joint? (Please don't say anything bad about another place).

"Low and slow" The light, low heat breaks down the tissue.

Why did you start a barbecue business?

Got out of college and Vietnam service and took a job at a hospital as a food service director for 2 years. Always wanted to run his own business. They put

in a coal power plant nearby and there were no restaurants to feed the workers. Put in a barbecue restaurant and served 500 people a day, 7 days a week for 6 years. "That was a driving point"-was able to send two girls to SMU and UT with money made in the barbecue business.

What's the history of your business?

[SEE PREVIOUS QUESTION]

Who/What has had a major influence on your cooking/recipes?

Learned some ideas when he was 9 from an old gentleman he knew. He was about 80 and would dig a hole in the ground, put wood in it, and put a screen over it. He cooked a lot of lamb, a lot of chicken and some sausage.

Where do you see this business in 10 years?

Will probably retire in the next several years.

Name a particular person/group you have had the pleasure of serving?

Both George H.W. and George W. Bush

Barack Obama had his barbecue

Bum Phillips

Earl Campbell

Troy Aikman

Did some stuff for the Spurs

What makes you wake up every day and start the grill – what drives you to keep cooking?

"The drive, it's in your blood""When you are taking care of your clients, when you say that you are worldwide, you can't close because you never know when that person who read that article is gonna come to your barbecue place and you are closed, that's the worst thing you can do."

What is your cooking process? Type of Wood? Type of heat?

"Low and Slow". Light low heat will break the tissue down. Not rushed. Rendering all the fat. No injections, just a good quality rub. Smoke for 15 hours. Start with the lean side and let all the fat render. Uses commercial smokers.

OTHER QUOTES

“A lot of people think barbecue is work. To me it’s not because I’m doing what I love to do and I know about it. I cooked long enough to know I can look at it and tell when it’s going to be good. I don’t think you can’t ask me anything about barbecue that I can’t answer.”

“It’s a field in its own; it’s different from anything else.” “It don’t take a lot to do it, but you have to put a lot of time into it.”

“The key to cooking barbecue, when the juice drip out you put juice back in. You mop it, that’s a savior”

“Acidity breaks town the tissue”

“I master the pit, I’m not just only a pitmaster”

“It’s not a job, it’s something that I love. It’s something I enjoy. It’s something that I can teach. “It’s not just cooking barbecue, it’s a roadmap from raw meat, to cooked meat, to your stomach-to your taste buds.”