

## **Livin' the 'Que' Lifestyle**

*by George Hensler (first published in the KCBS' 'Bullsheet' newsletter)*

Most folks I have met over the years while hanging out on the competition trail do more than just cook the occasional BBQ contest, many are living what I consider, the 'Que' lifestyle. Let me explain....

First off let me say, I am continually amazed at the various backgrounds that folks involved in the sport of competition BBQ are coming from. You have lawyers, health care workers, executives, firefighters, police officers and other professionals, as well as folks involved in various aspects of the barbecue industry. Restaurant owners, caterers, vendors, sauce and rub makers all can be found under the large tent that makes up the competition barbeque world.

These folks, despite their formal training, career choice or required employment wardrobe during the week are, on the weekends, more than comfortable in an old tee shirt that smells of smoke, a pair of crusty shorts, a crazy hat and an almost worn out pair of crocs. Often times, they can be spotted with a cold drink within their reach and a big smile on their face. Friendly would be an understatement. One thing is for sure, and at the risk of sounding like the proverbial broken record, they are absolutely, without a doubt, some of the nicest people you would ever want to meet, regardless of how they are dressed.

When asked, they can lament for hours and hours about the intricacies of the way smoke and heat travel through an offset cooker versus a cabinet style smoker. They could go on forever when discussing the subtle differences created when blending various fruitwoods during the cooking process. If you are smart, you won't even think about getting them started into a discussion regarding their current contest chicken preparation unless you've nothing to do for the next 4 or 5 hours.

An inspection of their home kitchen will find a huge assortment of various spices, seasonings and barbecue rubs. Their Number 1 spare refrigerator located in the basement or the garage most assuredly will contain a large collection of pints, quarts and gallons of commercially available barbecue sauces along with several containers of homemade concoctions sporting labels such as, "ribs" or "brisket" or "pork". Many times, a second fridge is nearby marked with a large sign instructing nosy passers-by not to open for any reason. This is where the pit master is wet aging their contest briskets, and the space is off limits to the rest of the family or anyone else for that matter

The garage, which at one time actually contained a car, is now used as a storage room for an assortment of cookers, wood, aluminium pans and charcoal. If the garage does in fact still contain a vehicle, take a quick look around the property, there will be a trailer parked in the driveway or a large storage shed containing the above listed items, trust me on this.

What I am getting at here is that, in addition to being laid back and very friendly, these folks are passionate about their "hobby". They live and breathe this stuff. They are, in my opinion, living the 'Que' life-style for today, as well as paying it forward the future by instructing the newbies as well as answering the questions posed by those thirsting for knowledge about cooking with fire and playing with smoke. They are always willing to discuss cooking methods or cooker recommendations with anyone at the very drop of a sauce-stained hat.

Another thing you can count on is when invited somewhere, these folks never show up empty handed, many times bringing along something they have prepared on their grill or in their smoker, usually a past crowd favourite from their extensive repertoire of time-tested recipes. Just a word of caution though, you might want to pull up a chair and grab yourself a cool drink if you dare to ask them how it was made 'cause your probably in for a long and very detailed explanation. After all, they are livin' the 'Que' lifestyle and it is what they do!