

# A Traveler's Library

*Books, Movies, and other Travel Inspirations*

## Big Barbecue in Texas

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👤 Brette Sember

## TASTY TRAVEL

**Destination: Texas**

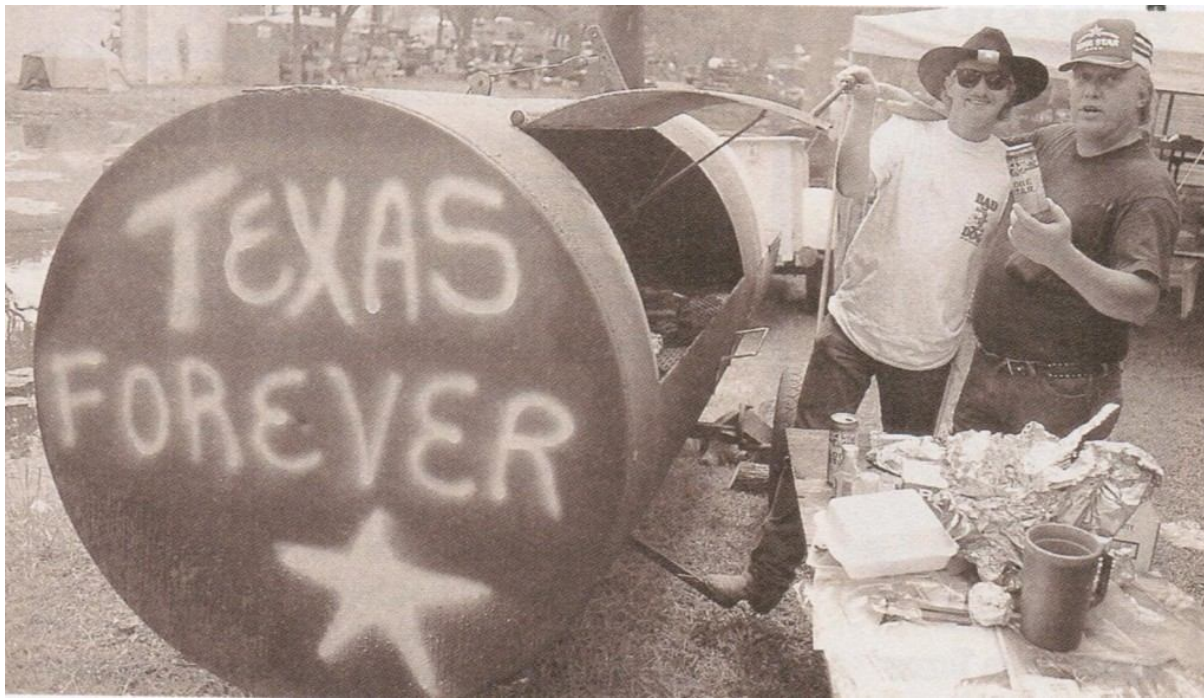


**Book: *Legends of Texas Barbecue Cookbook* (2002) by Robb Walsh**

## By Brette Sember

If you're not at the beach in the summer, then you probably want to be at a backyard barbecue. They say everything is bigger in Texas and that seems to hold true for their barbecue as well. I sat down with ***Legends of Texas Barbecue Cook Book*** by **Robb Walsh** (Chronicle Books), thinking I knew how to barbecue. But barbecue is serious business in Texas.

Your little backyard grill? It doesn't hold a candle to the smokers made of oil pipes, open pits, barrels, or the giant BBQ trailers you can rent for the weekend (if you happen to have a trailer hitch on your car). And if you think grilling a steak is barbecue, this book will teach you a thing or two! While the book does give very detailed descriptions of the different equipment and set-ups for barbecuing, I wish it offered some really basic info for home cooks who don't want to buy a lot of equipment. Almost all the recipes require smoking, which is not something the average backyard barbecue chef is comfortable with.



*Texas Barbecue*

The book starts with a detailed history of how Texas barbecue began (10,000 years ago with the Caddo Indians) and evolved as different peoples came to the area. The sport of barbecue (and it is without question a sport in Texas, verified you see the photos of the trophies that are competed for!) has been influenced by African-Americans, German-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and virtually every large ethnic group that has made an imprint on the state of Texas. Barbecue is a huge cultural institution in the Lone Star State and it seems no celebration is complete without some meat being cooked over a fire. Texans have made a tradition of this, and stories of the “free barbecue for all” festivals at inaugurations and other festivities are simply mind-boggling.

For those who think a gas grill is how you barbecue, the book goes into great detail about the variety of equipment used to produce authentic Texas barbecue. I had never heard of a water smoker nor knew the secrets of the charcoal starter chimney. The personal stories of famous barbecuing Texans will introduce you to the men (and very few women) who live and breathe barbecue in competitions, restaurants, and backyards.

These are the folks who live and breathe barbecue and they share their advice and tips. The photos in the book are pretty fantastic. Cowboy boots? Check. Cowboy hats? Check. Huge, giant pits, and massive barbecue festivals? Yep. Big hair. Most definitely. Crusty, dusty cowboys? For sure. This book shows you that the Texas of legends is very much alive and well and just waiting for you to visit and taste it. The photos of the meat are a visual treat. Rich, succulent, deeply glazed, and cooking amid giant clouds of smoke on dry landscapes, the barbecue in this book really does look like the stuff of fantasies.

Some of the recipes will make you do a double take. One barbecue champion swears that marinating chicken in bottled salad dressing is the key to his success. Many recipes use no sauce whatsoever (which is surprising if you aren't familiar with the vast geographic divide in barbecue across the country). And if you're looking for the presidential touch, Ladybird Johnson and Barbara Bush's recipes for barbecue sauce are included. Country style ribs marinated in orange juice, beer can chicken, pork shoulder, sirloin, barbecued goat, turkey, lamb, barbecued bologna (which apparently tastes like hot dogs), and brisket recipes will get



*President Lyndon Johnson and Lady Bird*

you salivating, but don't forget the sides! Barbecued cabbage, fried green tomatoes, turnip greens, mashed potato salad (and other potato salad variation), cole slaw, and of course, beans, all sound like they would be perfect next to a nice slab of smoky meat on your plate. You could eat for an entire summer just with this cookbook as your guide.

The final chapter is one you will want to rip out and put in your glove compartment if you're going to be in Texas. It lists exactly where to go to get authentic Texas barbecue, with details on what to order and what to skip at each joint. Once you've seen the photos in this book and dog-eared a few recipes you'll be imagining yourself at the barebones wooden table of a real Texas barbecue joint with a Coca-Cola sign overhead, digging into some Texas-raised and Texas-smoked beef while a guy in jeans, boots, and cowboy hat gnaws on a bone behind you.

To read about another great Texas cookbook by Walsh focusing on the Mexican influence, check out, [The Tex-Mex and Backyard](#)

[Barbacoa Cookbook](#).

Here are three recipes from ***Legends***, to get you started:

#### **Dozier's Crispy Grilled Ribs**

2 cups white vinegar  
 2 cups vegetable oil  
 1 rack 3 ½ down pork spareribs (under 3 ½ lbs)  
 3 tablespoons Billy Pfeffer's Dry Rub (recipe below)  
 Barbecue sauce of your choice (optional)

Combine the vinegar and oil in a mixing bowl. Rinse the ribs and pat them dry. Season both sides of the ribs with the dry rub.

Set up your smoker for direct heat. When the coals are gray, spread them out and place the ribs on a grill at least 18 inches above the coals. Cook for 20 minutes, mop with the oil and vinegar mixture, and then flip the ribs over and cook the other side. Light more coals in a chimney starter and replenish the fire after 1 hour. Continue flipping and mopping for roughly 2 hours, or until tender. Serve with barbecue sauce if desired. Serves 2 to 4.

#### **Billy Pfeffer's Dry Rub**

3 tablespoons salt  
 3 tablespoons good paprika  
 1 tablespoon ground black pepper  
 1 tablespoon cayenne  
 Combine all ingredients and store in a shaker bottle. Makes about ½ cup.

## Jalapeño Potato Salad

4 large potatoes, peeled and cut into ¾-inch cubes  
¼ cup Dijon mustard  
¼ cup white wine vinegar  
2 cloves garlic, crushed  
¼ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper  
½ cup olive oil  
One 3 ½-ounce can pitted black olives, drained  
¼ cup thinly sliced scallions  
6 ounces feta cheese, crumbled  
4 jalapeños, seeded and chopped

Place the potatoes in a 3-quart saucepan or Dutch oven and pour in cold water to cover. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 10 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender. Drain.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine the mustard, vinegar, garlic, salt, and pepper. Slowly whisk in the oil. Add the potatoes, olives, scallions, feta cheese, and jalapeños. Toss to mix well. Serve chilled or at room temperature. Serves 6.

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*The photos above are scans from the **Legends of Barbecue** book, used by permission of the publisher.*



Brette writes often about travel, food, and home arts and is the author of more than 40 books about food, law, health, family issues, business, finance and textbooks. She blogs at [Putting It All on the Table](#) and her personal web site is [Brette Sember](#).

[Brette Sember](#) – who has written 27 posts on [A Traveler's Library](#).



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## About Brette Sember

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## 6 thoughts on “Big Barbecue in Texas”



October 27, 2012 at 3:54 am

Now I'm dreaming about BBQ and gobbling it with cold beer.

sandra

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July 5, 2012 at 2:34 pm

Anything for us “herbivores” who eat neither meat nor potatoes?

Germaine  
Shames

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July 5, 2012 at 4:23 pm

No potatoes either? I'm afraid you're going to have to make the suggestions.  
Doesn't sound like Texas is your kind of place.

pen4hire

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July 5, 2012 at 11:53 am

LOVE to barbecue! Always looking for fun new recipes, so appreciate the post.

Jane  
Boursaw

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July 5, 2012 at 11:40 am

pen4hire

Barbecue has always been big in the U.S., but surely LBJ's presidency kicked it up a notch with all his famous BBQs at the western White House in Texas. When I visited there, I could just imagine the wonderful aromas filling the air!  
But I'll need to adapt the ribs recipe for my backyard Weber BBQ since I don't have a handy oil drum.



July 5, 2012 at 6:05 am

Pamela

Okay, now you've just made me hungry. And I don't usually eat meat (although I might try the potato salad recipe you posted).

It's fun to see how BBQ brings out the passion of a region. I'm amazed that Western North Carolina and Eastern North Carolina are still the same state given their vastly different opinions about proper BBQ. And North Carolinians can't even compete with Texans for being opinionated.

*Comments are closed.*