

Home made smokers

I've built a few of them, but i built them out of scrap wood... I was making a LOT of moose and caribou sausage, bear hams, smoked salmon ect., so i made them fairly big, about the size of a one hole out house, and of course, with a door. You can put wire racks in it, or some shelves, or some green limbs going across it, to hang things on... But, you don't put a floor in it, as that's where you make the fire.

Once it's built, dig a hole in the center of it in the ground, put in lit charcoal/or a "small" wood fire in. (you may want to start with charcoal to get a feel for how this works) then put just enough water soaked wood on the lit charcoal to make smoke, and there you have it. I've seen guys put an electric burner in the bottom with a pan of wood chips for smoke too.

My best one, i put on a bank behind my house, and then in the side of the hill/bank i dug out for an old bbl stove i had. Then i ran the stove pipe under ground to the smoker...

Anyway, you add charcoal/wood or crack the door to control the heat, and make improvements as you see the need... I smoked HUGE amounts of fish and meat this way...

As a side note: One time my dad made a "temporary" smoker out of a big HD card board outboard motor box, and i bet we smoked 100 pounds of salmon in it, before we got careless and it caught on fire... lol

Keep in mind, you can size this all down or up to get what size YOU need...

DM

Laura,

My best suggestion is to learn the art of low and slow before you decide on what you want in your brick smoker. If you build now, chances are good that you'll have some "wish I'd done....." later.

Learning fire tending, regardless of the fuel source - wood, briquette charcoal, or hardwood charcoal is an important step. Learning if you have the patience for a 12 to 18 hour cook. Learning how much you want to do in a cooking session - direct bearing on your brick design.

The Chargriller with the side fire box is a good way to learn, while you're fine tuning your brick pit design. It's economical, as you can spend hundred's of dollars on a commercial smoker. Google Big Green Egg for an example.

Plus, after you have your brick smoker, you'll still have the Chargriller for grilling. IMHO, it's the best I've found (in the price range) for grilling without using propane. With the side firebox, it's great for doing batches of beer can chicken to vac seal for heat and eat meals, for example.

Even if you don't get a Chargriller (sold at Lowes and/or Home Depot), I do encourage you to start out this way before you build your dream pit.

Hope this helps.
Lee

It seems to me there are various techniques being considered here. I see three of them:

1. Smoking. There is very little heat in the processing, just lots of smoke. The heat of the fire does not cook the meat; it's just the smoke that is preserving the meat. Sometimes the fire is not even in the smoke house, it can be outside of it. Then you would have a hood over the fire catching the smoke and channeling it into the smoke house. Or, as it already has been described, just set a small fire on the ground in the smoke house with meat sitting up high on the shelves. You can smoke sausages, hams, etc. this way but the meat is still not cooked.

2. Off set grilling. On this method you have a large grill and you build a hot fire but the meat is not setting directly over the fire so the drippings do not cause the fire to burn uncontrollably. Plenty of smoke is generated and the warmth of the fire eventually cooks the meat. It can take all day and/or all night to cook the meat. It's nice to keep a pan of water next to the coals underneath the meat to keep it from drying out. I *love* this method. Especially for brisket.

3. Direct grilling. The meat is directly over the fire which you have let burn down into coals. Plenty of smoke and plenty of heat. Hamburgers, sausages, chicken, and veggies or just about anything else you would care to cook can be done this way. Doesn't take too long either. My favorite way to cook chicken is to spatchcock it. Take a whole chicken and cut out the back bone and then spreadout the chicken in a butterfly manner. Or, you can go easy and do a beer can chicken (where you, uh, stick a half way full can of beer up the chicken and sit it on the grill).

Comments/criticism welcome

TSJ, you summed it up nicely!

That's why I asked Laura those questions earlier. Sounds like the second one is what she has in mind. In addition to the offset, she also has the option of a vertical with a water pan (I fill mine with sand covered with foil, btw) to keep the meat from being exposed to the direct effects of the heat.

I like spatchcocked the best, myself with my Dad's eastern NC style mopping sauce (vinegar based). Beer can chicken when I'm cooking for a crowd or the freezer because I can get more on the grill.

Laura, I've looked at those grills at Sam's and drooled over them. You can do low and slow bbq'ing on them. Using soaked wood chips will give you that smoked flavor. It's actually easier, but you don't gain the experience you need if you're planning on a wood fired smoker. It will help you with a lot of the basic techniques you'll need to know regardless of the heat source.

Pick up a vac pack of Boston butts from Sam's club for some pulled pork. They are more forgiving than many other cuts. Fire up that grill, add soaked chips for the first

hour or so, and enjoy some pulled pork. Vac seal the leftovers and freeze for some great heat and eat. Just drop the frozen package in a hot of boiling water. Makes great Q and slaw sandwiches. There are alot of different recipes for the rubs and mopping sauces, so it depends on what style Q you like as to which ones you'll choose.

Lee
