BRISKET TIPS

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Rev D

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Chile River Trading Company

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INTRODUCTION

Well, rest assured that Brisket is THE most difficult type and cut of meat to cook properly. Our hope here is to give you some tried and true observations from some of America's Top Pitmasters as to how to make this happen for Y-O-U!

Rest assured there are as many ways to cook Brisket as their are BBQ chefs. It is our sincere desire to help get you started off in the right direction. It CAN be done by you, as long as you follow a few tried and true principles. While this document may be a bit lengthy, we feel IF you read it all of the way through, your 'Brisket Experience' should turn out just fine!

While you may notice similarities in many of the Chapters (and methods), and you begin to feel as though you can 'skip' much of this, please know that each contributor has special little TIPS that WILL benefit you. Enjoy!

CHAPTER ONE

"DEFINITION OF BRISKET"

To quote from the Bible Of BBQ, The BBQ FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions), it defines "Brisket" as follows:

"Brisket"

[BRIHS-kiht] A cut of beef taken from the breast section under the first five ribs. Brisket is usually sold without the bone and is divided into two sections.

The flat cut has minimal fat and is usually more expensive than the more flavorful point cut, which has more fat.

Brisket requires long, slow cooking and is best when braised. Corned beef is made from brisket."
For Texas-Style barbecued brisket, we use the whole brisket, containing both the 'flat' and the 'point', untrimmed of fat, known in the industry as the 'Packer's cut'. The typical full brisket weighs in at 8-12 pounds and is about 12-20 inches long and about 12 inches wide. The 'point' is the thicker end and the 'flat' is the thinner end. The deckle end is the 'point' end.

You can read the ENTIRE BBQ FAQ's at the two following locations of the Web:

The PORCH BBQ Home: http://www.bbq-porch.org/faq/default.asp
and also at: http://www.eaglequest.com/~bbq/faq2/toc.html

Well, now we know what Brisket is. But, more importantly, HOW do we turn this into something edible, let alone Pure Heaven, as the Boys From Texas would have us believe?

Well, rest assured that Brisket is THE most difficult type and cut of meat to cook properly. Our hope here is to give you some tried and true observations from some of America's Top Pitmasters as to how to make this happen for Y-O-U!

CHAPTER TWO

"WHERE BRISKET ORIGINATED AND HOW TO COOK IT"

By Billy Maynard

PART 1

WHERE DID BRISKET ORIGINATE?

I think that beef brisket belongs to Texas like peanuts to Georgia and pulled pork to North Carolina. Did you know that until about forty years ago, brisket was considered a worthless cut of meat? Most folks would just discard it or grind it into hamburger meat. But down in the hill country of Texas, ol' brother Wolf was
buying all the brisket he could get to make his chili with. Then about 1950, two German brothers, who had a meat market, begin cooking barbecue in their market to use up leftover meat. So one of them got the idea to smoke a brisket, as he was smoking sausage one weekend. He left the brisket all weekend in his smokehouse. Then on Monday, as they were serving their barbeque ... pork, sausage and chicken ... he cut a slice off the brisket and put some on each lunch plate. Everyone began telling him how good and tender it was. So with that, they began to cook beef brisket for barbecue. So Texas owes Thanks to the two German meat market brothers, from the hills of Texas, for our Beef Brisket Barbecue.

Like lots of things, the briskets of today are so much improved over the time of the German brothers. The briskets of old were more than half fat. But with the better cattle now, you get lots better beef brisket. Still, the only way to make them good and tender is good slow cooking over good hardwood smoke. Here's the way this ol' Texan tries to cook a beef brisket.

PART 2

TIPS FOR SMOKING A GREAT BEEF BRISKET

1. PICK A WELL-MARBLED BRISKET!

One where most of the fat is down in the meat and not all fat on the outside. But you do need a layer of fat on the outside too. Fat inside the meat will help keep it moist, so you still need some fat both on inside and outside, but remember selecting a good brisket is half the technique of good barbecue. Get one in a Cryovac package.

2. THE SIZE OF YOUR BRISKET:

A real good size is a brisket from 6 to 10 pounds. The size, big or small, will be more of a personal choice. Just remember that slow cooking your brisket for 1-1/2 to 2 hours per pound at 225F is a pretty fair timetable. But first, ya got to season it!
3. SEASONING YOUR BRISKET:

There are as many ideas on the best way to season a brisket as there are brisket cooks. No two will do it the same, and very few will do it the same way two times in a row. You can marinate your brisket, dry rub it, sprinkle it with spices, or do all three. I, myself, do a little of it all.

3A. MARINATE:

You can either use store-bought marinade, or maybe make your own. I use a mixture of beer, Dr. Pepper, and Willingham's commercial marinade. (Editorial Note: See The Recipes Chapter for More on This!

Just cut a hole in the Cryovac package, pour in the marinade and seal the hole with some duct tape. I let the brisket marinate overnight in the refrigerator. Dry it off the next morning and let it sit for about half an hour.

3B. DRY RUBS:

I use a mix of Garlic powder, black pepper, salt, cumin, red pepper and a little brown sugar. I almost forgot the paprika; put some on, as it gives the brisket a nice color. But there's lots of good dry rubs out there on the market. Try some of them.

After the brisket sits for 30 minutes, warming up, I give it a good rub with the dry rub mixture. Rub it in GOOD ... don't just 'sprinkle' it on.

4. YOUR FIRE:

It doesn't make a big difference on what or how you're cooking, as long as you have a good, low, long-time steady heat. It may from wood, electricity or gas. For the last twenty-five years, I have used a wood fire in everything from a barrel, into a washpot, to a high-dollar smoker. I still say you can cook good barbeque in anything, as long as you watch your fire. What you want is a good, steady, low fire with a temperature between 200/225F at the meat level. (NOTE: At the grate level).
5. SMOKE-COOKING THE BRISKET:

Put the brisket on the grill FAT SIDE UP. I have found that I do better with my brisket if I cook it about an hour per pound on a good low fire of hardwood and then wrap it in foil and put it in a picnic cooler or Styrofoam dry ice chest for up to eight hours (wrap it in some towels for more insulation, so it keeps warm longer). If I slow cook my brisket for 18/20 hours in the smoker, my briskets are always too dry for me. But remember, any ol' boy can be like the blind dog and find better way to do it. Good smoke will have a sweet flavor and that is what you want - not a bitter flavor. You will get a smoke ring of 1/32 to 1/2 inch most of the time. The presence or absence of a smoke ring don't make a big difference in the taste of your brisket, but it does make a better- looking brisket. Different seasonings will make a difference in the size of your smoke ring.

6. SLICING AND PRESENTATION:

Last, but not to be overlooked, is the presentation of your brisket. I don't care if it is just for your wife and kids, or your mother-in-law, or your boss or if you're in a million dollar cook-off, a brisket that is half bad, will come out extra good if it is sliced and presented just right.

Always slice your brisket across the grain of the meat. This is very important, as it will make a more palatable and tender slice of meat. Remember, a good barbecued brisket doesn't need a sauce poured over it. If you want to, serve sauce on the side.

7. CONCLUSION:

Now, that's the way we do it up the Paluxy River in the hills of Texas. Talking about all this makes me want to go cook some barbecue. Beef that is.
CHAPTER THREE

BRISKET - "THE HOW TO - AND COOKING TIMES"

By Danny Gaulden

PART 1.

PICKING A BRISKET

The first thing one needs to know is how to pick out a good brisket. For home smoking, one in the 8 to 10 pound range works well, and doesn't take as long to barbecue as an 11 to 12 pounder. Look for a brisket that has about 1/4 to 1/3 inch of fat across the top. This is generally called the "fat cap" by most barbecue folks. Don't buy a pre-trimmed piece, for it will not cook as tender, and will be dry. With the brisket lying down and the fat side up, try to pick one that is thick all the way across the flat. This can be hard to do sometimes, for most are thick on one side, and taper down to become fairly thin on the other side. Try to find one that has a more rounded point, rather than a pointed point. Briskets with rounded points tend to be more meaty in this area. Briskets come in two grades, "choice or select". Choice grading costs just a few cents per pound more than select, and generally has more marbling. Either will do well, but choice is usually a little better.

PART 2.

PREPARATION

After you have chosen your brisket, generously apply a good rub on it, wrap it in clear wrap, and let it sit in the refrigerator overnight. This will allow the seasoning to work its way into the meat a bit.

The next day, as you are building your fire, bring meat out of the refrigerator and let it sit at room temperature for about 30 minutes. You do not HAVE to apply a second fancy rub at this point. If you don't have one, just use a little salt, pepper, and powdered garlic. You don't have to use any kind of a rub if that is your desire, but I prefer to use one.

After your fire has settled down to around 240-250F, put the brisket in the pit, fat side up and leave it like that the entire time if you're using a pit like my Big Bertha with a Ferris wheel rack system or a water smoker. Now if you're using an off-set firebox type pit, like a New Braunfels Black Diamond or a Klose, put the brisket on the rack fat side up and then turn it over and mop it every two hours so the
bottom side doesn't get too much heat and dry out. While it's with the fat side up, the fat renders and penetrate in, over, and around the cooking meat. When brisket becomes fork tender in the flat, take it off the pit, let it cool for about 30 minutes, then slice and serve. Always check brisket for doneness in the FLAT, not the point. The point will generally become tender before the flat, and can deceive you. Continue to cook until the flat is tender. OK, a lot of folks on the BBQ Mailing List asked me what the internal temperature is when I take the brisket out of the pit after I figure they're done. So I measured a bunch of them with a meat thermometer and almost all of them were right at 188F.

PART 3.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

How many hours does one smoke a brisket? This argument will go on till the end of time, and is hard to answer, for there are so many variables. Two people that think they smoked their briskets exactly the same will most likely come out with two totally different finishing times. I like to smoke mine for about 1 to 1 1/4 hours per pound. That would put me at about 10 to 12 1/2 hours for a 10 lb. brisket. No longer. I peg 240-250F as constantly as possible. Sure, one will have some temperature ups and downs, but I keep it at that temperature fairly well. I don't go off and forget about the fire and I don't open my pit every 10 minutes to "take a peek."

I choose a good piece of meat. All these things make a difference in how long the process will actually take. Another thing to take into consideration is the quality of the meat. All briskets are tough, but some are tougher than others. This will have an effect on the overall smoking time also. I have made a few boo-boos in my many years of smoking briskets, but not many. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, they are tender, juicy, smoky, and a piece of meat I am proud to serve to friends and customers.

PART 4.

HOW TO TELL WHEN IT'S DONE

After 24 years in the business, I take tough cuts of meat (brisket, butts, etc.) off by the fork tender method, not time or temperature. BBQ'ing is an art, not a science as baking. I think some folks have the idea that Q'ing is like baking ... follow the recipe to exact measurements, time, and temperature, and all will turn out good. That just won't happen in Q'ing. It is an art. I know that "great" baking
requires a talent and art to produce the best, even with the measurements, but Q'ing demands more. It is one of the hardest art forms to learn.

However, as you go down the road to achieving the best BBQ you can, it doesn't hurt to have a little science behind you. The science does help a lot, to a point, and I feel it is necessary, for it helps you understand what the hell is going on. If you can understand it, you can always do better. But only a lot of cooking practice and improving your skills and techniques will get you there. Many a time, I have told folks that BBQ'ing sounds easy ... all you have to do is make the right fire and know when to take off the meat. Only a fellow Q'er that has tried this a few times knows how difficult this can be. It's the easiest thing to explain, and the hardest thing to do, that I have ever experienced in my life.

Under normal smoking conditions, with the heat being equal on the point and the flat, the point will become tender before the flat. The reason is simple ... the point has more marbling, or fat in it, vs. the flat. This makes it cook faster. I have heard some say that the point took longer to cook than the flat. Something's not right there, for under equal heat, the point will become tender first. No need to panic, just let it cook all together until the flat is tender.

How can you tell when a brisket is done ? When you cook as many as I do everyday, you learn fast not to judge when a brisket is done by its size. If you play that game, you're gonna mess up a bunch of meat. You treat each one as a totally separate little critter, and never judge it by it's size. Have had 14 pounders come off the pit sooner than 10 pounders.

Number one, you don't want "falling apart" brisket ... maybe from the oven, but not for real pit BBQ. Tender, yes. You should be able to slice the meat. When holding a slice in your hand, with a slight tug, it should pull apart. That's real pit brisket. It should have a wonderful, flavorful crust that is very tasty and robust in flavor, not too dry, and a real thrill to eat sliced with and mixed into the sliced meat, or mixed into chopped beef.

Some cooks like to finish off a brisket by wrapping it in foil and continuing to cook for a few hours. Finishing off one's brisket in FOIL will not achieve this degree of finesse, but I have seen many a pit where I have felt that it was necessary to do that to produce a decent product ... such a shame. It will not achieve the same level of perfection as a piece of meat smoked in a smoker that didn't require that process.

Your internal temperature should reach 190 to 197 degrees in the FLAT, if you are cooking at 235 to 250 degrees. I didn't say hit and miss at these temperatures, I said COOKING at these temperatures. You must keep your temperature up, and average these temps. to have the above directions work for you. If you're cooking at lower temperatures, the flat will read at a lower temperature when done.
How to check for a perfectly done brisket is not easy.

Here are some hints: The above temperature readings are in the flat; fork tender; or placing a broiler fork straight into the flat and lifting straight up. If the meat lifts up with the fork, it's not done ... if it doesn't, good chance it's there.

PART 5.

COOKING TEMPERATURE

Some BBQ cooks like to hold the temperature of a brisket at 170 degrees until done. This "holding at 170 degrees internally" for hours on end is bull to me. I have never found that productive, nor produced a good brisket following that procedure. The fat will hardly render, and lots of not good things will happen to the meat. You would have to have a very low and hard to manage fire to keep the meat at such a temp. The theory behind all that is that the meat will start to lose it's moisture above that temp. Fine and dandy. That's all science book theory. As we all know, sometimes that works, and sometimes it doesn't. In the real world, I find that a bunch of crap. Meat held at that temp. takes many more hours to "become tender", and a slower dryness occurs, vs. cooking at a slightly higher temp. for less time, and less dryness. It's that simple.

Don't get carried away with the "I can cook as hot as I want" syndrome. Only up to about 250 to 260 degrees maximum for the internal pit temp. will work for a really good brisket. I have found that once one gets over about 250 or so with a wood fired pit, you stand a much greater chance of creosote and soot. Reason being: the higher the heat, the bigger the fire. The bigger the fire, the more chance for a hard to control fire. A hard to control fire produces bad stuff.

PART 6.

BRISKET YIELD

A correctly cooked brisket will lose 40% of its weight in the cooking process, and the average person will trim off about 20% in fat, after cooked, if cooking a packer. With my briskets, I never expect to have over 4 lbs. out of a 10 lb. average brisket. Sometimes we get a little more, sometimes, a little less.
PART 7.

SERVING BRISKET

If you're not ready to eat it as soon as it done, double wrap in foil, and set it in a non-drafty place or a small ice chest (no ice) until you are ready to serve it. Don't leave it for too many hours, or you can risk food poisoning. As long as the internal temperature of the meat stays between 140 to 160F, it is safe.

Before serving brisket, divide it into three pieces.

Here's how you do it. Make sure you have a SHARP knife. Now, with the lean side of brisket up, cut off the point (deckle end). The reason you want to do this with the lean side up is that it is much easier to see where the point and flat join. Now turn the brisket over with the fat side up and cut off the skirt, flap, whatever you want to call it. The reason for this is that the grain runs in a different direction than the flat and should be separated from it. With the skirt removed, trim the fat off of it, top and bottom and where it is connected to the flat. Don't be surprised if there is a lot of fat ... another reason to separate these pieces. Now turn the skirt so that you are cutting against the grain, and make the slices at about a 30 to 45 degree angle. Cut slices off of the point also, going against the grain, and do the same to the flat. Mix the different cuts together, and serve.

PART 8.

STORING LEFTOVERS

After cooked, freeze in whole form ... fat and all. Thaw out the morning of the day you want to serve them. Trim off all fat except for about 1/8 inch or less, and re-heat in pit with medium smoke and indirect heat. This will keep the briskets from drying out while heating, and allow smoke penetration to rekindle original flavor.

PART 9.

WHAT ARE BURNT ENDS?

The burnt ends of a brisket come about two ways. As stated above, they can be made on purpose by returning the point to the smoker for another 4-6 hours and they can result from the thinner parts of the brisket's flat getting overcooked during the smoking process. The burnt ends are usually rather dry and very smoky tasting. These can be served thinly sliced with lots of barbecue sauce or chopped up and used in dishes like chili, stews and soups.
I recently did a long, extensive test on the "newer, leaner" briskets it seems we are getting the past year or so. Even the choice cuts I have been getting have very little fat cap. The results will be a little shocking, but beneficial to all.

The brisket I will report on was 11 lbs., nice form, 1/16 to 1/8 inch fat cap the first 4 inches of the flat (hate that), and not a lot more the rest of the way. Went out and bought a few new oven thermometers, checked them for accuracy (they were correct) to make sure my pit temperature gauge was accurate. It was off about 15 degrees. The oven thermometers were a K-Mart brand named "Bakers Secret", and I really like them. About $5.99 each. They're big, easy to read, and good. Checked my meat thermometers with ice water and they were right on the money (32 degrees).

Started the test. I stuck one of the meat thermometers into the flat of the chosen test brisket, right out of the walk-in. It was on 38 degrees. By the time I got the fire going, loaded the meat on the pit, ( a pretty fair load of 17 briskets, 15 slabs of ribs, 2 butts, several cuts of boneless, skinless turkey, some sausage and ham), 15 to 20 minutes had passed. The pit temperature was at about 70 degrees. Locked the doors down and started the test.

This is a very interesting test that I don't think has ever been run for the BBQ mailing list, nor myself. It is interesting to see how the temperature rises, drops, and rises again in Q'ing. This rise and drop in temperature is not a mistake on my reporting. It actually happened. It also happened on the other brisket I tested. You will also notice that once the temperature got into the "evaporation zone" (160 to 180 degrees), the rise slowed down considerably. Not sure why, unless it was due to some chemistry taking place during the evaporation process, or the fact that the closer the meat gets to the inside pit temperature, the slower it goes. The window gets smaller, just like a car's acceleration. The closer you get to its top speed, the longer it takes to get there vs. the off the line 0 to 60 burst.

However, you will notice that the temperature started to rise again after about 3 or 4 hours in the 160 degree or so zone. The pit that this meat was cooked on cost a lot of money, is very accurate, easy to control, and maintains a natural high humidity level. Your home pit may not cook the same, therefore you must make you own adjustments.
HERE'S THE REPORT:

Pit temperature at closing of doors: 70 degrees (due to time of loading with doors open for several minutes.)

Brisket internal temperature at loading time ... 40 degrees.

<table>
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<th>Meat Temperature</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>182 degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 hours 15 min</td>
<td>270 degrees</td>
<td>182 degrees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I start the burn on my pit slowly. Lots of smoke and low heat for a couple of hours. Then I start to kick it up a bit. One can get their pit up to a higher cooking temperature sooner, if they desire. You may notice that the temperature in the pit rose a bit as the time went on. This was not due to me making a larger fire. As a matter of fact, I kept making a smaller fire, to a point. If I had maintained the burn much lower, I would have had to start a new fire every time I added a new log, considering the fact that this pit demands a greener wood to cook correctly and is extremely efficient. One must also consider that a smaller burn would be needed as time goes by, due to the fact that the meat is at a much hotter temperature than when the pit was first fired with all of the product at 40 degrees. Plus all the ribs, turkey, etc. were off the pit by this time. Less meat on a pit to soak up the heat, less heat needed. This may not apply to someone cooking just a couple of briskets, ribs, butts, etc. on a home rig.

So what have we learned from all of this? First of all, one needs to know the structure of the meat he is dealing with in order to get an approximate, and approximate only, on how to figure out the time and temperature game. You're working with two different meat cuts here ... one fat, one lean, and you need to know how to successfully Q each of them. It's kind of like playing checkers. The meat throws a move on you, and you adjust. You've got to learn how to beat it.
To prove to myself that I wasn't going crazy, for I have long thought that a brisket should reach anywhere from 190 to 197 degrees internal temperature in the flat to be done, I tested the few (about 5 out of the bunch cooked today) briskets that had a good fat cap. They came off the pit anywhere from 190 to 195 degrees, in the flat. This was the kind of brisket I was getting a year or so ago, but not so much now. So we need to know how to deal with what we are given. A totally different feel with the fork is in play here. They feel tender, but not the same as a brisket with a good fat cap. Are they good? You damn right, but not, in my opinion, as tender and moist as the heavier fat capped ones.

When doing a temperature test, you must know where to put the thermometer, or it ain't gonna work. It will make the difference between a great brisket and one that only your dog would eat. The thermometer MUST go into the flat, not the point, or anywhere in between. Have the flat facing towards you, and in the thicker part of it, place your thermometer. Make sure the thermometer goes in about 2 1/2 to 3 inches. Don't place it in the thinner part of the flat, nor within two inches of the outside of it. To give you an example of temperature variation, the fatter, point of the brisket can read 10 to 20 degrees hotter than the flat. This is more common than uncommon. This could really screw up your day if you don't know where to put the thermometer. Think. Will the point over cook because it is at a higher temperature. No. The fat and marbling round it keep it nice and moist. Don't worry about it. Worry about the flat.

For the record, this 11 lb. test brisket came off the pit at 6.7 lbs. A 39.1% shrinkage. Cooking time: about 61 minutes per pound. If the fat cap had been thicker, it would have had a tad more shrinkage, but not a lot. Why? Because a fatter brisket will get done faster than a leaner one. However, the fatter one will have more trim-off and less yield. It's definitely a trade off. Fortunately, when you can go to the market and "pick through" the bunch, you may be able to get the cut of meat you are looking for. But for professional pitmasters, and large caterers, that isn't possible. We have to buy meat by the case.

Some of you may feel that the cooking temperatures I achieved towards the latter part of the cooking process were a tad too high. Not so. I make the kind of burn I feel I need to cook with. Quite frankly, I judge the cooking process more with the kind of fire I have, than with the temperature. There's good fire and then there's bad fire. It was a small fire, and the meat was cooking just like it should be. Not too hot nor boiling the fat. Just a good steady cooking process going on. Too hot a fire will boil the fat, and you can hear and see it when you open your pit doors. At that point, you need to back off.

This brisket took 11 hours and 20 minutes to finish.

To me, that's slow. Especially for a cut of meat that's not much more than 3 or 4 inches thick to start with. There's no doubt that there is a "bragging thing" about how long one cooks their Q. Especially brisket, butt, etc. Don't get caught up in
this. Too slow can be bad ... very bad. Don't get carried away with too high a temp., but don't cook so slow that you don't even render the fat, and are in reality making jerky.

I ran another test with one thermometer about one inch into the brisket, and the other about three inches in. Note the fact that this brisket had a better, but still not great, fat cap, and weighed less than the other test brisket. Due to the "just a little better" fat cap is why it came off at a higher temperature, and cooked less time per pound. I am sure of it. The shrinkage was close to the test brisket done earlier.

Facts: 10.63 lb. brisket.

Fat cap approximately 1/8-1/6 inch.

Internal temperature of brisket at start of test: 40 degrees.

Pit temperature at start up: 68 degrees.

Pit temp. Thermometer in 1 inch. Thermometer in 3 inches.

Hours cooked.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Cooking Time</th>
<th>Pit Temperature</th>
<th>Thermometer 1 Inch IN</th>
<th>Thermometer 3 inches IN</th>
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<td>270 degrees</td>
<td>176 degrees</td>
<td>167 degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 hours</td>
<td>275 degrees</td>
<td>180 degrees</td>
<td>172 degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 hours</td>
<td>275 degrees</td>
<td>194 degrees</td>
<td>180 degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 hours 50 min</td>
<td>275 degrees</td>
<td>200 degrees</td>
<td>190 degrees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brisket weighed 6.63 lbs. straight off the pit.
Shrinkage: 38%. Cooking time per lb.: 55.5 minutes.

From This Webpage by Danny Gaulden: http://www.dannysbbq.com/brisket.asp
CHAPTER THREE
"HOW TO DO BRISKET"

By BBQShack

BRISKET

Brisket is by nature, one tough piece of meat. What makes its tough is the connective tissue, or collagen. The collagen must be broken down to a gelatin type nature and this can only be done by slow cooking at low temperatures for an extended period of time. We're talking an environment of 225 degrees F for approximately 1 hour to 1.5 hours per pound of meat.

PREPARING THE BRISKET

Buy the brisket according to the info above. If there is a fat cap greater than 1/4 inch, trim down to 1/4 inch. At the nose end (thick end) there will be a layer of fat on the side that needs to be cut out. Cut this out wedge shaped. There will be a somewhat smaller amount of fat on the other side of the brisket and this should also be cut out in the same manner. Once the trimming is done, season liberally with your favorite BBQ rub, wrap in plastic wrap, and let set in the refrigerator overnight.

SMOKING THE BRISKET

Start the fire and set the brisket out. When the smoker is at 200 to 225 degrees F, put the brisket in the smoker, fat side up! If this brisket is 10 lbs, it will need approximately 10 - 12 hours cooking time. DO NOT open the smoker for at least 4 - 5 hours. You will loose heat by checking it too much. Also, don't mop until 4 - 5 hours. The salt/sugar in your rub will start osmosis (pulling moisture from within the meat) at the time it's put on the meat. This moisture mixes with the rub and forms a paste. This paste is what becomes the crust on the outside of the brisket. Mopping or spraying down the brisket before 4 or 5 hours will wash off the paste. Be patient and allow the paste to form ! Feel free to mop at every "half-time" until you reach your anticipated finish time. NOTE: If your temp is a little higher, the brisket may get done quicker, but beware of drying it out. Just remember, when it comes to BBQ, there's no replacement for "Low and Slow".
*** HOW TO SMOKE A BRISKET TEXAS STYLE ***

Courtesy Of

Paul & Diane - Chile River Trading Company
http://www.chiliriver.com/Brisket/Brisket_1.htm

At the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, Texas' largest and most widely attended rodeo event, each year over 300 "cook-off" teams compete for the Blue Ribbon naming the best of the best in barbeque cooking.

Setting up in tents in the Astrodome parking lot a week before the opening of the Show, teams come from all over the world to compete. Many work year round to perfect just the right blend of seasonings, cooking technique and cooking time to create the perfect barbeque. The result, if you are a barbeque fan, is as close to Heaven as any ordinary human can get.

While many different types of barbeque meats are judged (chicken, sausage, deer, duck, pork, etc.), the top-of-the-line, cream-de-la-cream, granddaddy of 'em all is the brisket competition. To take a tough ol' leftover piece of cow, more suitable for re-soling a boot than lifting one's soul at the table, and turning it into the most tender, flavorful, succulent, delectable morsel you could ever imagine eating in your entire life is the magic performed by each barbeque team at the rodeo cook-off, and by thousands of others in the Lone Star state each year. How they do that is a secret known to Texans, and a few fortunate others, for over a hundred fifty years.

Now, with just a little practice, the minimum of "right" equipment, and the "secrets" revealed here you can produce your own "award winning" brisket that will reap the esteem of your neighbors and be the envy of your family. Who knows, you may even put a team together and compete in the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Cook-Off yourself. Good luck, good smoking and good eating.

BEFORE WE START

Once you have smoked a brisket or two, you may look at this "technique" as elemental, or basic in nature. It is my objective to provide you with a step-by-step "recipe" that will assure you success the very first time you try. Now, by default I admit that this is MY method for smoking a brisket. As mentioned in the opening above, hundreds of cook-off teams, and thousands of individuals all have their own variation of what will be discussed here. Each of them (of course)
believes that the method they use is the best. And, that's fine. You too will develop your own technique, your own twist to the theme as time goes on. But, for starters if you will follow the procedures described here, you will consistently produce good results.

If you are new to barbeque, or are very serious about perfecting your backyard "Q" skills, the Internet Barbeque Mailing List's "Most Common Mistakes Made By Beginners," is a must read.

Now . . . "To Smoke a Brisket - Texas Style."

***

BUYING BRISKET

For our purposes a 10 lb. brisket is ideal for smoking at home. Ten pounds of smoked brisket will serve 8 to 12* people at a party well, or a family of 4 for a week, or more. You may even get tired of it before its all gone. But, don't worry. Brisket freezes well and is just as good a month or two from now (once thawed) as it was on the day it was cooked. Once we have eaten all the brisket we can stand, we chop it in a food processor, freeze it in ziplock bags and use it for sloppy joes. Mmmmmmm Mmmmmmm.

Brisket is a meat that should be available in all parts of the United States. If your local supermarket does not have brisket displayed, you may ask the butcher for some. Don't let him trim off all the fat. Keeping the fat on the meat during cooking, is one of the secrets to getting good flavor and helping the meat become tender during cooking.

Sam's Club, at least here in Texas, always has brisket displayed in vacuum sealed (Cry-o-vac) plastic (which stays fresh for longer periods in the fridge). Kroger and other national food chains also carry brisket. If they don't have it displayed, just ask for it. It will be worth the trouble.

You may buy brisket frozen or thawed. If frozen please let it thaw naturally in the refrigerator for two to four days before you plan on cooking. PLEASE DO NOT TRY TO THAW IN THE MICROWAVE. It may partially cook the meat and may ruin the cut for smoking.

Because brisket is naturally tough and somewhat fatty, it is one of the least expensive cuts of beef you can buy. You may, if you wish substitute any "roast" cut of meat for brisket, but remember the thicker the cut of meat the longer you need to smoke it to assure it is done through and through.
Tender cuts, steak for instance, do not lend themselves well to smoking.

(*) Mayor's Note: The recommended portions listed here are based on my own personal experience. Jeff Wheeler, one of our visitors (also known as "bigwheel") after reading our recommendation wrote, "... I knew it was time for me to take you under my wing. With a 10 lb. Packer trimmed brisket got to figure 60% waste for fat and water. Which then leaves with 4 lbs. of lean meat ... which would feed about 4 full grown Texans ... if they weren't too hungry ... and you had a bunch of sides. Best strategy on a full brisket and a mixed crowd of wimmen ... chillins ... and adults ... is 1 1/2 lbs. per each of raw brisket."

Now, I use 1/2 lb. per person. You might figure about 3/4 lb per person to start with and see how that works for you. But, if you take "Bigwheel's" advice, one thing is for sure; No one will go away hungry. I guarantee it!

***

LIST OF ESSENTIAL ITEMS

To smoke the brisket (or just about any other meat) please be sure you have the following items on hand before you start:

(A) An H2O Smoker, one which has a pan for the coals (F) at the bottom, a pan for water (G) between the heat and the meat in the middle, and a top rack (K) for the meat. The smoker should have a domed lid (A), or enough room for the meat to rest without touching.

Note: For a more detailed discussion on the merits of various types of smokers, go to "Barbeque Porch - FAQ - Home Smokers."

(B) Here's the biggest secret of all: You must have a barbeque RUB. All of the cook-off teams have their own secret formula Rub. You can make your own, of course.

(C) THE BRISKET. Select a meat that has good marbling and a fair amount of fat on one side. A 9 to 11 lb. brisket is ideal for most purposes. If you just can't stand it, you may trim a little of the fat to shape the meat. But, please leave a good 1/4" to 3/8ths of an inch, or more on the top side of the meat. Most of this will melt away during cooking and it is essential for good flavor and tenderness. The meat should not be so large that the sides will touch the smoker once put on the grill. Wash and pat dry the meat before you apply the rub.

(D) HICKORY CHIPS, not the anorexic little scraps you find at some grocery stores, but real chunks of wood. Soak the wood chips in water (E) at least an hour before you need them. Longer is better. Overnight is terrific! The idea is to
allow the chips to smoke (not burn) as long as possible. It adds wonderful flavor to the meat. Here's a secret: Mesquite Beans. Substitute Hickory chips with Mesquite Beans; not mesquite wood chips (found in some grocery stores, or barbeque shops), but real dried Mesquite Beans. You'll think you have gone straight to heaven. (Mesquite is a low growing hardwood tree found mostly in west Texas).

(H) Charcoal. Please be sure you have enough charcoal. We usually buy it in 10 lb. bags. Smoking is done over a long period of time, relative to grilling a steak, and takes a lot of charcoal. A 10 lb. brisket will take from 4 to 6 lbs. of charcoal, unless you are smoking on a cold day. Cold weather smoking requires more heat, thus more charcoal. Do not use any self-start charcoal, the kind with the starter fluid already in the briquettes. The chemicals in the briquettes never burn completely out and will flavor the meat so that it tastes like charcoal starter. Note: You may use charcoal starter with any brand name charcoal, so long as the charcoal is the type you have to light to start yourself. The starter fuel will burn off leaving no lasting flavor in the meat.

(J) Tin Foil: Use to line the bottom of the charcoal pan.

(K) A good sharp knife and a heavy duty fork.

***

STEP ONE - APPLYING THE RUB

For a smoked brisket to qualify as having been done Texas Style, a rub must be applied to it before being placed in the smoker. For those of us that remember how much fun it was to play in the mud as a child, applying a rub to a brisket (or any other meat for that matter) is much the same kind of fun.

To Apply the Rub: After washing and pat-drying the meat, shake a liberal amount of the dry rub on to the meat and "rub" it in. Do not dry the meat too much. You want enough moisture left on so that the Rub will stick to the meat. Cover the meat, top to bottom, with the rub. Get in the folds.

Cover all the meat on both sides. Leave a course coating of the rub on the outside. You almost can not use too much rub. When the meat is completely covered with Rub, let it stand for awhile to allow the spices to begin to permeate the meat. A good way to accomplish this is to rub the meat first, then set it aside while you prepare the smoker.

***
STEP TWO - THE SMOKER

A short note on the smoker itself: For home use, an inexpensive, commercially produced H2O smoker is more than good enough. Most hardware stores, home improvement stores, and some grocery stores carry decent lines of such smokers. Just be sure the smoker is big enough to use on larger cuts of meat, like the brisket; or larger birds, like the turkey. It would be a shame to go to all the trouble necessary to smoke a favorite meat, only to discover that your equipment is too small.

Our smoker cost less than $50.00. You can spend a whole lot more (some mobile rigs cost in the thousands). But, unless you are planning on getting into the competition business or are going commercial, the back yard variety will work just fine. Please be sure the smoker you buy has a water pan that is placed between the fire and the meat. This will keep the meat moist during the smoking process and help to tenderize tougher cuts of meat.

***

SOAK YOUR WOOD

Wood Chips: Truth is, that the selection of wood chips to provide the “flavor” to your smoked meat is almost as personal as finding the right automobile, or joining the right country club. Pick the right one (for you) and life is sweet. Pick the wrong one and life is like squatting with your spurs on; it just doesn’t feel very good.

For Texas style brisket the chips of choice are Hickory, Pecan or Mesquite. I personally like Hickory or Mesquite. The “best of the best” is Mesquite Beans when you can get ‘em. Pick the biggest pieces. The big ones last longer, giving your meat more flavor. Put the chips in a bowl of water and let them soak for a minimum of one hour before use. The longer they soak the longer they will last in the fire. Over night soaking is the absolute best. Some of the pros even pressure cook the chips to drive the moisture into the wood. I personally think that’s a bit much. But, if you are after perfection, you might try it.

EDITOR’S NOTE: One Of the MOST EXPERIENCED SMOKERS IN THE US suggested adding onion powder and garlic powder (already dissolved) to your “chip soaking water.” It makes your chips burn so sweet! Try it - We think you’ll like this!

Charcoal: Line the bottom bowl of the smoker with tin foil (for reflection and ease of clean-up purposes) and fill the bowl with as much charcoal as it will hold.
Mound the charcoal up in the center. If you purchased a commercial smoker, it came with a chart for weighing the amount of charcoal to use for a particular kind of meat. Forget it! Unless you are smoking a small bird (a chicken) or small game, you just can not over cook the meat.

**HEAP THE CHARCOAL**

You can dry it out by leaving it on the heat (way) too long, but in most applications the meat will not burn. Just fill up the pan, and keep it replenished during the smoking process. Place the charcoal pan in the smoker (bottom brackets). Saturate the charcoal with charcoal lighter fuel. I use Kingsford or Gulf brand, but any quality lighter fuel is fine. I do not recommend a cheap, generic store brand of lighter fuel. What you do not want is a chemical after taste left in the charcoal, and ultimately on your meat.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** We STRONGLY recommend the use of a WEBER brand charcoal chimney to start your charcoal and/or wood (if it is chunked up). This will save you lots of $$$ over the long haul on charcoal lighter fluid, your charcoal will be burning FASTER, and the WEBER allows for an even better tasting end product. We endorse ONLY the WEBER brand of chimney, as it is constructed TONS better than the competition, holds more charcoal (and/or wood), is MUCH easier to use, will NOT burn your hands (when used properly) and lasts far longer. About $15 at WalMart.

**LIGHT AND LET COALS TURN GREY**

Make sure the charcoal is well moistened by the fuel. Let it sit for a few minutes, then light. Let it burn until a gray ash is formed over most of the coals. If the edges are still black don’t worry, the charcoal will burn evenly after a short while.

Add Wood Chips: Just before you put the meat on the grill, add some of your moistened wood chips to the charcoal pan. Don’t use them all at the beginning. You will want to add more later. Just lay 4 or 5 evenly on top of the charcoal. They should immediately start to smoke.

Add Water: Now that the charcoal is ready and the wood chips are on, insert the water pan in the smoker (resting on the middle brackets) and fill it with water. Again, you can disregard instructions that may have come with your smoker as to how many pints, or quarts of water are needed for any given process. In a long duration smoking, such as a brisket or turkey, you will need to replenish the water about half way, to two-thirds the way through the cooking time anyway. So just pour away. Fill to within about one inch of the top of the bowl and go get the meat.
STEP THREE - THE SMOKING

COOKING TIPS AND SECRETS

So far you have been given several tips and secrets on smoking meat in general, all of which of course apply to brisket. But now, in this section, I'm going to give you the keys to the kingdom; the secrets to cooking outstanding, lip-smacking, family and friends pleasing brisket each and every time.

Allow the brisket to cook about 45 minutes per pound. This means that for a 10 lb. brisket, the ideal cooking time is about 7.5 hours. Cooler temperatures may extend this a bit, as hotter days may shorten the time somewhat. In general, though, cook the meat a little longer than you think you should. You will not hurt the meat if you leave it on for a bit after it is done. But, bringing a meat off the smoker early (whether its a bird or a beast) is a tremendous way to ruin a good party. Put the meat on the rack FAT SIDE UP. This allows the moisture of the melting fat to permeate the meat and carry the smoky flavor down deep into each and every fiber. Most of the fat will melt off, leaving a thin layer of fat on top, which can be trimmed after cooking, or cut around at the table. In any case, placing the meat on the grill so that the fat is on top will help tenderize the meat during cooking and enhance the flavor of the meat multi-fold.

Keep the cooking temperature up. Look in on the smoker every hour or so. During the 7 to 8 hours it will take to fully cook a 10 lb. brisket, the temperature in the smoker will tend to cool over time. While the temperature of the smoker does not need to be as precise as the temperature in an oven, you should try to keep it moderately warm during the cooking process. By this I mean the temperature gauge should be kept in the "Ideal" to low "Ideal" range during most of the cooking time. When the top is removed the temperature gauge will drop significantly. As long as you are tend to the coals and following the proper cooking procedure, do not worry about this. The gauge will re-adjust over time.

ADJUST AIR FLOW WITH DOOR

Allow some air around the charcoal, but don't let it burn too fast. Open the side door to the smoker slightly to allow some small amount of air flow in. You will have to watch the temperature gauge on top of the smoker to determine just how open or closed the door need be in order to maintain the Ideal cooking temperature without accelerating the burning your charcoal needlessly. On my
smoker, I leave the door cracked about 3/4" and keep it from flapping open by propping up my barbeque tongs against the door while its cooking. (Not scientific, but it works!)

Note: Do not worry if the temperature occasionally falls below "Ideal." Just stoke the coals, add some more charcoal, a few more chips and keep on cooking. It will be all right. Resist the temptation to look at your meat during cooking. One of the secrets to good brisket is to keep the temperature up as we discussed above. Remove the cover to the smoker only if you feel you have to. I usually only remove the top when it is time to add more water to the water pan (usually about 4 hours into the cooking period). If you combine this with a re-stoking of the coals, and a replenishment of new charcoal, the net effect in loss of heat will be minimal.

***

THE EATING

Without a doubt the best part of smoking meats is the joy on gets at seeing the smiles on the faces of those you love as they savor the tender, flavorful delight of barbeque done well. Some may just roll their eyes. You'll know how much they love your cooking because you will be getting the accolades.

The meat is ready after it has cooked for about 7.5 to 8 hours at, or slightly below, the "Ideal" temperature as shown on the temperature gauge. When you remove the cover do not be alarmed if the meat appears to be charred or "blackened" in certain spots. This is normal for smoked meats. Also, do not be alarmed if, when you stick the meat with a fork, juices flow freely from the meat and, in some cases, the juices appear to be slightly red. This is normal and nothing to worry about.

If you have cooked the meat the requisite number of hours at the appropriate temperature the brisket will be just perfect. All you have to do now is slice it and enjoy.

Brisket is best served sliced in thin pieces cut across the grain of the meat. Later you may wish to mince some of the meat to add to baked potatoes as a topping or serve on buns as a chopped barbeque sandwich.

A) The outside should be slightly "blackened" with the meat appearing almost over done.

B) A red band of meat from 1/4" to 3/8" should encircle the meat between the outside (blackened) area and the inside meat.
C) The meat itself should appear brown or grayish and appear to be done. Some people like their brisket on the "rare" side. To wind up with a rare middle, simply cut back the cooking time. Try cooking the meat 45 minutes to an hour less. By trial and error you will find the right cooking time for the doneness that you like. However, I have found that the less time you cook a brisket, the less tender the meat. So, for best results I cook the meat the full 7.5 to 8 hours as recommended here.

D) Properly cooked brisket will flow juices freely when it is first cut. If you can capture some, it makes a terrific gravy for mashed potatoes or rice.

FINAL TOUCHES

Brisket may be served with just about any other good food. It goes well with fresh salad and vegetables, with mashed or fried potatoes, or with traditional barbeque accompaniments: Baked Beans, Potato salad, dill pickles, and sliced bread. Chop it for topping baked potatoes, for making wonderful barbeque sandwiches, or for home-making sloppy Joe's.

However you eat it, enjoy and thank God for your bounty and His grace.

Paul & Diane
Chili River Trading Company
http://www.chiliriver.com/Brisket/Brisket_1.htm

CHAPTER FIVE

"BRISKET TIPS"

TIP 1 - FORK TEST

By David Amos

Yesterday, I did a 10 pound brisket, a 13 pound brisket and a 8 pound fresh picnic. We all know about time guidelines for cooking the beef and pork: Approximately 1-1/4 hour per pound for pork, and 1 to 1-1/2 hours per pound for brisket.
I put all the meat on at 7:00 AM and by 5:00 PM, all the meat was done! The pork was true to form about 1-1/4 hour to the pound.

But the beef brisket is a WHOLE different game. It will be done when it is darn well ready to be done! ... sometimes it is caused by the fat to meat ratio or by the thickness of the meat. Texas has always been a center of brisket cooking, and this has spread out somewhat in the South and to the northern parts of the country. So, a lot of people are not as familiar with the cooking of brisket as pork.

The Beef Brisket is one of the hardest things to smoke cook and have it come out right every time. Because brisket really has a mind of its own. It is fine to watch the internal temp and see about where you stand. But the meat will again be done when you can poke it with a fork and turn the fork in the meat with just a slight twist.

So figure ... Two briskets: one 10 lbs. and the other 13 lbs. Done at the same time. And fork-turning tender when cut up. They were really juicy.

David Amos

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I agree with you on brisket, David: They have a mind of their own.

I've had briskets take 2 hours a pound to get to the point the fork test works.

Jim Minion

=======================================

TIP 2

"BRISKET FAT TRIMMING"

By David Klose

Someone asked:

I asked my butcher for a packer cut brisket, which I described as the whole brisket cut from the side of beef with the deckle bone in. He sent me a humongous chunk weighing around 25 pounds. I smoked it in my brand new Klose offset rig for at least 16 hours around 225F, and it was still not done and trimming off all that hot fat after the fact was a bit dicey. It ended up making great sandwiches, but it seems from reading your posts that that's not the way to do it.
***

From David Klose of BBQ Pits by Klose:

I always trim the fat to about 1/4" thick before cooking.

You can leave all the fat on, cooking fat side up if you want.

Cooking at 225 degrees F, you are going to have to cook at about an hour per pound. That equates to about 25 hours for a cut that large. It will however come out nice & sweet tasting.

BBQ Pits by Klose  www.bbqpits.com
1-800-487-7487  Call for a Free Catalog
Email: bbqpits@msn.com

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TIP 3

BRISKET TIME AND TEMPERATURE

By Frank Boyer

I know that you can cook things at above 250 F, and add the effect of radiant heat also.

I have done a 125 pound hog in seven hours with my cooker cranked to between 350-375 F. When I do a hog on a spit, the radiant heat speeds up the process.

Ziggy from J R’s School of Southern BBQ Class does ribs on a grill in 2 1/2 - 3 hours and they are surprisingly good.

I usually cook a 10-12 pound brisket around 1-1/4 to 1-1/2 hours per pound. I get a much juicer and tender product that way. The fast cook joint brisket WAS NOT all that tender, and had dried out a bit. It was closer to pot roast than the best brisket that I have tasted.

======> Foiling and/or holding the meat in liquid really adds to the pot roast effect. I prefer low and slow.

A shoulder has a lot more internal fat and will do much better at the higher cooking temperatures than a brisket will.

Frank
Me and Fred (the world famous ... prize winning) King of the Trailer Cookers) got ourselves busy in the driveway last Friday night and broke our previous record for total poundage cooked ... when we charred up about 110 pounds of mammal flesh. Dead animal parts consisted of 10 briskets ranging from 10-12 pounds each. We did 8 for a neighbor as a grand opening free feed at his newest bar ... one for a buddy and one for me. I had help from another neighbor and the bar owner's 12 year old son.

We started about 8 PM with a light squirt of yellow mustard ... followed by copious application of rub, both applied to the lean side only. After cooking themselves for about 6 hours, we pulled them out and applied a big dose of Squirt butter, brown sugar, more rub, and half a can of Lone Star. Again to the lean side only. Then we double wrapped in TIN FOIL ....and put them back on the fire to chuckle away for a few more hours. We had a fine time tending the fire and recalling past heroic deeds as we drank adult beverages (the kid drank cokes ... with only one sip of homemade pear wine) while we tormented the sleeping neighborhood with strains of country music and combo smells of sizzling beef fat and wood smoke.

All were done and in the ice chests by 6:30 AM Saturday morning. We delivered the brisket to the buddy at 11:00 and picked up a ten spot from him. Then on to the bar with 8 briskets. We started eating at 2 PM. The meat was still nice and hot in the ice chests and TIN FOIL. The drunks all agreed was the best they ever ate ... while I stuck another hundred bucks in my pocket as payment for having so much fun. Since I am now a nice liberal ... believe in sharing the wealth ... redistributing income, ect :)... I gave the kid five bucks and the helpful neighbor half of my brisket.

Wish I could figure out some way to make a living out of this.
TIP 6

BRISKET RUB VS. NO RUB

By Harry Jiles

I cook briskets nekkid when I am cooking several for a group, because of the convenience. It is just a lot easier to take several briskets right out of the package and put them straight on the pit, than to go through the prep time of rubbing them and wrapping them hours before starting to cook.

However, when I am cooking them for my family or special guests, I do rub them because I do prefer a little more flavorful bark.

I use several different rubs, depending what I feel like using at the time. Many times I use Cavender’s Greek seasoning and a little extra garlic powder because I like garlic.

I also use a thin coat of mustard to hold the rub.

TIP 7

COOKING BRISKET WITHOUT A FAT CAP

By Billy Maynard

IF your brisket does not have a "fat cap" or enuff of one:

Go back to the meat market and ask them for some beef fat.

It works better than pork fat or bacon, but those too will work if that's all you can get.

Also after about four hours of smoking, keep a eye on your brisket, and if it looks dry ...... mop it with some oil-based mop.

Belly
TIP 8
THE USE OF FOIL IN COOKING BRISKET

By Ed Pawlowski

Someone wrote:

Memorial weekend I did my first brisket, so as you can see I don't know much about it.

I put it in my smoker for about 4 hours with the fat side up. I had rubbed a little kosher salt and Dijon mustard into it, and placed 3 large onion slices about 3/4" thick on it. I then wrapped it in heavy foil, with a little water added to make steam inside of it, and let it cook for another 6 hours at around 220 F.

It was tender enough to cut with a fork after I sliced it about 1/8 inch thick.

A good friend of mine that has been doing brisket for years said that he places the brisket fat side up in aluminum foil, and pours his favorite bbq sauce over it. He then leaves the foil open a little while it cooks and cooks it for 30 mins.

To XXX:

Skip the foil. Tell your friend to buy a crock pot and he will be able to cook his brisket just as tender and not have to worry about that messy fire and smoke.

I've experimented with foil in the past and yes, it will tenderize meat faster, but no, it does not taste as good as meat done without it. Put the brisket (whole, not the tiny supermarket cut) fat side up. Rub if you like.

I use salt, lots of pepper, maybe some garlic, onion, and add other spices along the way.

Trim the fat if it is more than 1/4" thick. Smoke until done, about 12 to 16 hours.

Ed Pawlowski

http://pages.cthome.net/edhome
Note: Someone posted the following article, taken DIRECTLY off the web, somewhere. Jim Minion, as most experienced Pitmaster read the message, and took the opportunity to comment on it. This is MOST USEFUL information!

First The Web Brisket Article:

Cooking beef brisket has traditionally been a lesson in compromise. Nature supplies the cut with a hearty taste, so producing flavor is not difficult. The tricky part is the delicate balance between toughness and moisture - you can have one or have the other, but it is very difficult to get both in the same piece of meat.

Because the brisket is cut from a load-bearing portion of the steer, right next to the foreleg, this cut has a much higher concentration of the connective tissue protein collagen than is found in a less active section of the steer. The collagen is what makes the meat tough, but if it is cooked long enough, the connective tissue will break down into gelatin, causing the meat to become tender. Collagen begins to convert to gelatin at about 150 degrees. As the internal temperature increases beyond 150 degrees and even though the collagen is being converted to gelatin, moisture is being driven out of the brisket. As the brisket gets drier, it actually starts to toughen again even though the collagen is being converted. This is true as the internal temperature rises to near 200 degrees. But at approximately 210 degrees a dramatic reversal occurs. The brisket becomes remarkably (fork) tender and the rapid increase in the gelatinization of the collagen at this temperature outpaces the loss of moisture, thus producing a texturally pleasing brisket. An ideal situation.

A full, untrimmed beef brisket can weigh as much as 14 pounds, of which about 10 percent is surface fat. During the cooking process, the brisket will lose approximately 35% of its weight and will shrink in size.

HERE’S HOW

If you are not cooking a whole brisket, then chose the "point" end to BBQ. The "point" end is the thicker end and contains more ribbons of fat. Even though the
"flat" end is considered the better cut, the "point" does an outstanding job of BBQing because the ribbons of fat help keep the brisket moist during the cooking process. Generally the "point" end is not readily available at the meat counter - ask your butcher for an untrimmed "point" that is 5 or 6 lbs. If you do the "flat" or a whole brisket instead, be sure to ask the butcher for an untrimmed cut.

Apply your favorite rub several hours prior to putting the brisket on the BBQ. Cook the brisket for 16 to 20 hours. BBQ the brisket with the fat side up. Adjust the BBQ for a grill level temperature of 200 to 225 degrees F. Apply heat and smoke (Hickory, Oak, Mesquite, etc.) for the first 3 hours of cooking; apply only heat beyond that. Too much smoke can impart a bitter taste (Ed Note: NOT true!). After the brisket has cooked for approximately 14 or 15 hours, the internal temperature of the brisket will be in the ballpark of 180 degrees. At this point, increase the grill level temperature to about 250 degrees. This is to cause the internal temperature of the brisket to rise to 210 degrees. If you are BBQing the "point" getting the temperature to 210 degrees will take longer than if you are BBQing the "flat."

When the internal temperature reaches 210 degrees remove the brisket from the cooker and let rest for a half-hour so. Slice the brisket across the grain. The brisket should be fork tender and quite moist.

NOTE: Generally the temperature gauges on a smoker do not measure the grill level temperature and can vary widely from that at the grill level. The smoker temperature gages can be calibrated by placing an oven thermometer on the grill and noting the difference in the readings. (This test should be done while burning charcoal since wood smoke will cause the oven thermometer cloud over to the point the thermometer can not be read.) An alternative is to use a Volt-Ohmmeter that can electronically measure temperature. The BK VOM model 2706 is one such device.

COMMENTS TO ARTICLE

By Jim Minion

Having read this gentleman's article on brisket here are a couple of observations:

His idea on dry rubs doesn't take into account for osmosis caused by the salt in the rub. The salt causes the spices to be drawn into the muscle tissue. I've cooked more than a few briskets and moisture content is not hurt by dry rubs.

Second if you pull a brisket at 170* internal you will have a TUFF piece of meat. I suggest you pull the brisket at 188 to 200* internal. Try pulling brisket between these temps, and decide for yourself what you prefer.
He did state that the use of aluminum foil does create an inferior product and he is right there. You take the chance of taking the brisket texture to somewhat like pot roast when using foil. If you are up against a time crunch, foil will work to get the temperature up, but please use this as last option.

Last if you - or most of your guests smoke tobacco, you will want to use MORE SALT or the flavor will be bland.

Jim Minion

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TIP 10

A "NEW" WAY TO COOK BRISKET

By David Klose

As Related By David Schaefer

Hello All:

I am Dave Schaefer, a lurker, and I also cook with Don and Anne Martin on the Wauhatchie Stump Jumpers BBQ team. I have been in pursuit of "the perfect brisket" the past few weeks.

Last weekend, I cooked up a 11.5 lb. brisket, using a new technique (to me, at least) shared to me by David Klose (Thanks Dave!).

TIP: Start off the brisket at around 350F, for a half hour, and the let the temperature drop for another half-hour to the 250F range, and hold it there.

To see when it was done, I used the "fork test" (which was also a new technique for me). When I stuck it through the brisket, it offered no resistance at all. I stuck it with my insta-read thermometer instead of a long-tined fork. I glanced at it and was surprised to see it read either 210F or 220F. I was so shocked by the temperature, that I grabbed it to get it off the grate to begin cooling, thinking I had screwed it up royally. Fortunately, it was darn near perfect.

My criteria for "perfect" was: It needed to have a thin, crispy crust on the outside, and then be soft and tender on the inside. And a slice should pull apart with slight force.
I used a simple rub of salt, paprika, black pepper, and cayenne, and rubbed it on using a little olive oil to make it stick, right before it went on the pit. In the past have let it marinate in the rub for at least a day in the fridge. I was very pleased with the result.

Yesterday, I cooked a 9.5 pound brisket, and when it as done, the insta-read thermometer (which I took better care to pay attention to) read 192F internal. OK, all of this hair splitting and detail is to get me to my question:

When fork testing with the insta-read thermometer in several places through the flat and point, the tine would go through effortlessly at least half way, then would offer more resistance to get it through to the bottom. Is this a sign that it was not done enough, and I should have kept it on the pit until it felt like it did last weekend?

Answer From David Amos:

This is what I have said, that the brisket has a mind of its own. It will be done when it is done. I have taken briskets off at 175 to 180 and had them just fall apart tender - very easily pulled the slice apart .... then other times like you said I thought the darn thing was burnt up ... 210 or so. But it too was done and not dry. I like to cut a little sample when the temp gets up about 170, just to have a taste. I can tell if it tastes a little greasy, and it needs some more time to render out the fat a little more (ie, break down the fat some more.)

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TIP 11

USE ALL OF THE BRISKET - COOKED AND BURNT!

By Tracy Goldman

My favorite brisket tip comes in handiest during the learning stages of 'quing brisket.

If part of the meat gets overdone, or even downright burnt, rather than throwing that portion away, save it in the freezer for later use when making baked beans.

After thawing, throw the brisket piece in a blender or a food processor until the meat fibers are to the desired consistency.
It adds a wonderful BBQ flavor to BBQ beans, not duplicated with bacon nor Liquid Smoke!

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Editor’s Note: Here's a tip EACH of us needs!

TIP 12
"LEARNING YOUR SMOKER"
By Wyndell "Fergy" Ferguson

I don't recall who was first to posed the idea, but here is a simple method to "heat map" your pit's temperatures.

Buy a couple of containers of the refrigerator biscuits.

Place them around the pit after it is fired up.

Take a look in 5 or 10 minutes and the hot spot will be where the biscuits are cooked first.

Fergy

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TIP 13
MY FAVORITE WAY TO USE COOKED BRISKET
By Bruce Cook

One of my favorite ways to use cooked brisket is to cut thin slices <1/8 inch).

Add some of your favorite BBQ sauce.

Then split and fill hard-crusted sandwich/sub rolls with your brisket meat and BBQ sauce.

Add Cheddar or Colby cheese.

Wrap in foil and heat till warm.
This makes a WONDERFUL Philly/Texas brisket sandwich.

Yummy!
Bruce

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TIP 14
PRESERVING THE BOTTOM SIDE OF A BRISKET
DURING COOKING

By Dan Sawyer

I'm still workin' on the perfect brisket, but here is a tip that I use to "preserve" the bottom side of a brisket.

I spread-out some cheap bacon, ends and pieces, onto my cooking rack and THEN place the brisket on it.

This helps to keep the bottom side from getting "too crispy".

I don't know if anyone else has this problem, but after 15-20 hours of cooking, the bottom side gets a little dry, and I'll usually wind-up trimming off the dry stuff. However, when I use the bacon, it insulates the bottom side, and I will get a lot more usable meat. The brisket is still nice and smoky, but I don't lose any meat.

Illbetalkinatchalater,
Dan in WA

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TIP 15
BRISKET AFTER ITS COOKED

By Ed Pawlowski

When I take brisket off the smoker, I like to let it rest for 15 to 30 minutes before slicing. OK, I do cheat and take the end off to "test" it.
Sliced down, brisket makes a good sandwich with a little sauce. It makes a good meat with most any size dish.

In our house, a full brisket is more than we eat in a couple of days. A portion is cut off and vacuum sealed for the freezer. Handy on days when cooking time is short or the weather is foul.

We like to let it defrost in the refrigerator, but the microwave can be a big help. When reheating, use the microwave on a low or medium setting. Heat gently and it will not dry out at all.

Another way we enjoy brisket is cold. Slice thin, pile some on a roll, spread a gob of horseradish and a coating of mayonnaise. This makes the best cold beef sandwich you can get. You can figure what beverage goes best with it.

Ed
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CHAPTER SIX

"BRISKET RECIPES"

Marinades and Rubs

PART 1 - BRISKET MARINADES

RECIPE #1

BELLY'S AWARD-WINNING BRISKET MARINADE/MOP

Here is the Marinade:

1/3 Dr Pepper
1/3 Beer
1/3 Cooking oil

Mix what spices you like.

Marinade your brisket for 8 to 12 hours.

Keep some marinade to mop with.

For the MOP: Add two or three good size shots of a La Hot Sauce to the part you use as a mop.

Belly

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RECIPE #2

ANOTHER BELLY BRISKET MARINADE

Cup of oil
Cup of Dr Pepper
Cup of Dark Beer
Shot of La Hot Sauce
Garlic

This will do a 8 to 10 pound brisket
Belly

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RECIPE #3

BELLY’S DR PEPPER MARINADE

By Billy Maynard

Makes 2 cups

Yield: 1 serving

2 c Dr pepper
1/4 c soy sauce
1 ts Louisiana hot sauce
1/2 c lime juice

Mix ingredients together and use.

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RECIPE #4

THE DR. PEPPER BRISKET MARINADE NUMBER 2

By Billy Maynard

Makes 2 Cups

2 cans Dr. Pepper: up to
Lowerys Season Salt: to taste
Fresh Ground Pepper: to taste
2 Beef Bouillon cubes
4 oz water: for dissolving
Combine all ingredients.

Marinade brisket in juice for 2 days.

Early in the morning of the day you are going to cook, remove the brisket from the marinade juice, and let sit at room temperature while you get your fire and pit/cooker ready.

Place brisket in smoker, fat side up, and cook for about 12-14 hours at 275-325. I usually start about 7:00 or 8:00 in the morning and take off about 10:00 or 11:00 that night.

Baste during cooking with leftover Marinade juice.

Remove brisket from smoker and wrap in foil.

Make sure not to let any holes get in the foil or juices will leak out. Place brisket in foil in oven and let cook over night at 150-175. About 1:00 or 2:00 the next afternoon, you got the best tasting, juiciest and most tender brisket you ever had.

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RECIPE #5

For Briskets, I use a marinade similar to Belly's:

1 can Dr Pepper
1/2 cup RealLemon juice
and
1/4 cup Worcestershire sauce.
and a dash or 2 of Texas Pete or similar.

Wallace
PART 2
BRISKET RUBS

Rub #1

RUB RECIPE AND PRIMER

By Wyndell "Fergy" Ferguson

Wood smoke adds the most flavor to your BBQ. Rubs, marinades and mops are used to affect the flavors of the dark outside meat, and help form the bark characteristic of barbecue. The taste of the interior meat may be changed by applying a finishing or table sauce. Excellent 'Q' can be made with some, all or none of these.

RUBS:

A rub is a combination of spices that is "rubbed" into the surface of the meat. The rub seals in the flavor of the meat, and helps form a tasty crust. The rub pulls moisture from the air, and draws the juices from inside the meat. This reaction causes the meat to literally marinate itself. The best way to apply the rub is to sprinkle the rub onto the meat, wrap loosely in plastic wrap and store in the refrigerator overnight. Of course, like most things Good 'Que comes from experimenting and experience. Try different techniques to apply the rub, as well as how long you let it set before cooking. After sitting overnight, the rub will have become almost pasty from all the juices. I like to rub this back into the meat. I also usually apply some more rub just before the meat goes onto the smoker.

What kind of spices make up a rub?

Most recipes have two ingredients in common: salt and sugar. These are also the two most controversial ingredients. Salt draws moisture out of the meat, and sugars will burn or caramelize on the surface. Moderation is the key! Some of both ingredients are good, but don’t overdo it. Other common ingredients are: paprika, onion powder, garlic powder, pepper, cumin, sage, thyme, allspice, cinnamon, nutmeg and ginger. Learn the flavor of all the seasonings and herbs, and once again, experiment.
Start with a spice you like, and dump some into a bowl. You should be taking notes so you can repeat it if you like it! Take another spice you like and add some of it to the bowl. Mix well, then taste it. Is there enough of the second spice? Keep adding different spices and tasting the rub. I personally wouldn't add more than 8 ingredients since most people wouldn't be able to taste them. After you have the rub you like, try it on some Que. Then look at the rub. Do you have something like 1/8 teaspoon of some spice in a recipe that makes 4 cups of rub? Do you really think it adds something to the rub?

Make a batch without it and see if there is any difference. If there isn't, remove it from the recipe.

Simple is good! Remember, one of the key things about BBQ:

CONSISTENCY! Simple leads to consistency!

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RUB(S) #2

PREPACKAGED RUBS

By Wyndell "Fergy" Ferguson

Many folks like to use 'prepackaged' seasoning mixes as rubs.

LEGGS BBQ SEASONING:

Well, I got the two briskets and fresh picnic in the smoker, and they are cookin’ away ... I am using Leggs BBQ Seasoning. For those of you who have not tried this, LEGGS is a nice rub to start with and you can tune it to taste if you like. I don't use a lot of spices in general when cooking the meat, I like the smoke flavor to shine. I like to use LEGGS more like a light sprinkle to cover the meat like you would apply salt and pepper.

OLD BAY SEASONING:

Another great starter rub is Old Bay Seasoning. Add a little brown sugar and a little garlic powder and salt, and you have a nice EASY rub also.
TONY CACHERES CAJUN SPICE MIX:

On many occasions I like to use TONY CACHERES CAJUN SPICE MIX, especially when I get it on sale.

With these three rubs, a person could just about season anything they want to cook. Old Bay even does wonders for soups too, right out of the can.

Well .... I need to check on the meat !!!

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RUB #3

BIGWHEEL’S BRISKET RUB

By Jeff Wheeler

PS: Here be the rub I use if anybody’s interested. I Dearly love Wild Willys for brisket ... but I think this one is just a little better. I have used it several times with great results.

BigWheels’ Modified Wild Willys

3/4 cup paprika
1/4 cup black pepper
1/4 cup salt
1/4 cup brown sugar
2 T. chili powder
2 T. garlic powder
2 T. onion powder
2 t. cayenne
1 T. MSG
2 T. Lemon Pepper
2 T. Dry Mustard

Bob ... the best of both worlds comes to those who do it like this.

Take a medium brisket: 9-10 pounder. Give it a rub and stick it in the smoke for about 6 hours at 250.

At the end of 6 hours, move it to slow direct (200-220) heat - about 36” over charcoal or wood coals. And start mopping with a tasty oil-based mop till it cooks itself.
I got a patent pending on this ... so if you give it a try, thanks for sending me only 5 bucks.

Bigwheel

RUB #4

STU CARPENTER'S BRISKET RUB

By Stu Carpenter

3/4 cup sweet paprika
1/4 cup fresh corse ground black pepper
1/4 cup kosher salt
1/4 cup turbinado (sp?) sugar
4 tablespoons apple cider mix powder
4 tablespoons Haco demi-glace base mix
3 tablespoons Gebhardts chili powder
3 tablespoons garlic powder
3 tablespoons onion powder

RUB #5

CARDOGS CHAMPIONSHIP BRISKET RUB

By Jim Minion

1 cup sugar
1/4 cup garlic salt
1/4 cup onion salt
1/4 cup celery salt
1/4 cup season salt
1/2 cup pepper
1/2 cup paprika
1/2 cup barbecue seasoning
1/4 cup New mexican chili pepper
1/4 cup cayenne
2 Tbsp dry mustard
1 Tbsp cumin
1 Tbsp ginger
This will do a few briskets.

Jim Minion

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PART 3

BRISKET RECIPE 1

*** COWBOY BRISKET ***

The following brisket recipe is served at a hunting lodge in Alabama.

COWBOY BRISKET

4 lb  Brisket
3 ea Cloves Garlic, Slivered
3 ea Cloves Garlic, Crushed
4 ea Large Onions, Thinly Sliced
1 c  Apple Cider Vinegar
1 1/2 T  Bacon Fat
1 c  Strong Black Coffee
1 x  Salt & Pepper, To Taste
1/2 c  Water

With a long thin, sharp knife, make slits in the meat and insert the slivers of garlic.

Place the meat in a bowl, spread 1 sliced onion and the crushed garlic over the meat, and pour in the vinegar.

Marinate overnight in the refrigerator, turning several times.

When ready to cook, preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Heat the bacon fat in a deep, heavy skillet large enough to hold the brisket.

Remove the brisket from the marinade and discard the onion and vinegar.

Pat the brisket dry.  Brown the meat well on all sides.

Remove brisket to a platter.
In the fat remaining in the skillet, sauté the remaining sliced onions until deeply browned.

Pour in 1/2 cup coffee. Bring to a boil, stirring and scraping the bottom of the skillet to deglaze the pan.

Spread the onions and liquid from the skillet in a shallow baking dish. Place the brisket on the onions. Season with salt and freshly ground pepper to taste. Pour in the remaining coffee and water. Cover tightly with foil and place in oven for 1/2 hour. Turn the oven down to 250 degrees F. and bake for an additional 2 hours or until meat is very tender.

Slice the brisket thinly against the grain. Skim the fat from the pan liquid. Return the meat slices to the pan. Serve at once or refrigerate for later use.

Well, that's it, Gang. We hope this serves you well to preparing far better tasting brisket!

Please write us if you have time and let us know YOUR experience!

Best Wishes,

Mikey

(mikeyl@atl.mediaone.net)