

Smokers (BBQ, not tobacco)

I'm considering getting a smoker for chicken, fish, ribs etc etc. I'm asking for recommendations and recipes.

BTW: a *small* smoker is best as I live alone and don't need to smoke 10 lbs. of ribs or a 20 lb. turkey (except Kojak and he don't fit)

Don't make Kojak fly there and beat your old, retired arse.

Get a Big Green Egg. Just get the small version. You are welcome.

Jonathan Stein, California

I use a Weber 22" charcoal grill set up with the coals on one side, a metal bread loaf pan full of water next to the coals and beneath the meat, and a second bread loaf pan full of water on the grill above the coals. I also use a conventional oven thermometer to monitor the temperature.

This setup is adequate to barbecue a picnic roast, parts from a whole chicken, several sausages, etc. (not all at the same time). It works well, can be rearranged for for grilling, and doesn't require all that much charcoal. Another advantage is that you likely have a friend or neighbor who would be happy to give you a used one (for reasons unknown to me, there are people who own multiple grills they no longer use).

I would recommend getting a rib rack for ribs and chicken breasts.

Bert Krages, Oregon

Get a smaller version of some sort of kamado style smoker, e.g. Big Green Egg, Kamado Joe, etc. There are several out there.

They are a little more expensive, but will last forever and are well worth it.

Bobby Lott, Jr., Alabama

A weber smokey mountain or a pit barrel smoker would work.

Michael D. Gorman, Massachusetts

This is almost my exact set-up as well. I did not want to break the bank learning to smoke ribs and chicken, so made due with what I had... a weber grill. I did buy a grill thermometer but just for convenience. The half of the weber is big enough to smoke enough meat for a single person (and then some).

Holland King, Georgia

Do smokers require a lot of work or do you just have to check on progress from time to time?

Michael J. Polk, South Carolina

No not really. In fact, there is a saying on the pro bbq circuit, "If you're lookin', you ain't cookin'" In other words, know your meat, how long it should smoke, etc and let it be.

Bobby Lott, Jr.

It's best to check on the temperature and charcoal every 30 minutes or so, and also to brush water or marinade on the meat, but it is not too demanding once it gets going.

Bert Krages

I will add to the endorsements for a Big Green Egg (or similar Kamado-style cooker).

I have a BGE that I use for smoking (low-and-slow barbecuing) as well as for normal grilling of steaks, hamburgers, etc. With good-quality lump charcoal (/not/ charcoal briquets) I can get heat from around 200° up to 600° without any issues, depending on air flow. Plus, at the end of a cooking session, I close off the vents and am able to re-use the left-over charcoal the next time. Charcoal briquets produce more ash, and not as controllable, and cannot easily be saved from one session to the next.

One additional comment: my experience is that it is much easier to get the “large” size (the range is Mini-Small-Medium-Large-XL) than the other sizes, but that the large is very versatile, even for small quantities.

Happy cooking!

Brian H. Cole, California

Timely question, as this weekend we got a Masterbuilt Gravity Series 560 https://www.masterbuilt.com/products/gravity-series-560-digital-charcoal-grill-smoker?variant=30768323231859¤cy=USD&utm_medium=product_sync&utm_source=google&utm_content=sag_organic&utm_campaign=sag_organic&gclid=CjwKCAiAjeSABhAPEiwAqfxURYeUPVx8suUpYO15qXJnzKpxdH0vwA_JP7jqDxRYjFP0J-lqRYY9cBoC2KIQA_vD_BwE and used it to smoke a small brisket.

The assembly process was absolutely awful -- it was built in China and it shows. Let's just say that they apparently don't adhere to very tight manufacturing tolerances, and the assembly manual was created by someone whose first language is not English. There were thirty-two (32!) steps, and it took me -- someone who knows his way around a wrench -- every bit of 2-1/2 hours to get the thing together.

BUT, the abysmal assembly experience faded a little from my memory when I actually started using the grill/smoker. I really like the way it automatically regulates the temperature, and I love the phone app that lets me keep tabs on the meat from pretty much anywhere (I took my son about a mile from my house to ride his quad, and the app kept me informed as to the internal temp of the brisket the whole time). I think we may have a beautiful future together...

So, check it out. If you can buy one pre-assembled, it's a pretty sweet appliance.

Andrew C. McDannold, Florida

I have a Primo Komado grille/smoker and just love it.

Comparable to the Big Green Egg.

James P. Moriarty, Iowa

It depends on what you're using. No matter what kind of smoker, however, I recommend some sort of thermometer that is connected to the smoker via BT or Wi-Fi, so you can monitor temps of the meat and smoker remotely. Stick burners will need more attention than, for example, an electric (ick) smoker. It also depends on what you're smoking. Chicken pieces will smoke much faster than a packer brisket, for example, and thus the chicken will need less attention because it cooks faster. Depending on the equipment you're using, an overnight smoke of a 15-packer brisket could require a few wake-ups overnight to adjust temps, add wood, etc.

Scott I. Barer, California

I used a Weber for years and years, and still have it. It works great, especially for shorter cooks. But if you want to save work, when you are ready to graduate to longer cooks, e.g. brisket, pork shoulder, etc., a ceramic smoker is a lot less work since you can not have to add charcoal or wood chunks.

Bobby Lott, Jr.,

I found one at Lowe's in the scratch and dent section on Saturday.

https://www.lowes.com/pd/Masterbuilt-John-McLemore-Signature-Series-536-3-sq-in-Black-Electric-Smoker/1000386191?cm_mmc=shp_-c_-prd_-sol_-google_-lia_-119_-grills_-1000386191_-0&placeholder=null&ds_rl=1286981&gclid=Cj0KCQiA34OBBhCcARIsAG32uvM

Mmndx9sVJ3bzFctFKj_nftXR9nh2sZDENmATgdXSBZGoQCD0lhaoaAtPhEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds

I went "hog wild" over the weekend and smoked a variety of pork products with apple woodchips. My stomach is feeling the effects of too much pork and Super Bowl today. Mine is electric, which I appreciate. My kids really liked the chicken drumsticks that I did.

The only thing I need to figure out is safety. I started a massive fire in mine from all of the pork fat at the bottom. Luckily, I had already taken the meat out. I'd also like to try salmon.

Ryan Young, Virginia

Good deal, apple pairs very well with pork.

You might try just putting a foil pan in the bottom to catch the drippings.

Bobby Lott, Jr.

I did have a foil pan at the bottom. I think I might have been better off just letting the fat come through the small hole in the bottom and dropping out below (into a pan). I had the pan actually in the interior of the smoker. The fire was massive! It was my first time.

Ryan Young

How hot was the smoker? You probably shouldn't get much higher than about 275 degrees for pork.

Bobby Lott, Jr.
