

Smoking Basics eCourse - What You Need 2 Know

Part 1

Welcome to my Smoking Basics eCourse where I will be teaching you what I know about smoking meat and cooking outdoors successfully. This first installment will deal with one of the most important aspects of smoking.. *selecting your meat.*

Meat Selection

Like anything else, there are different types and grades of meat and while you may be tempted to purchase that half price brisket or pork shoulder it is best to make sure it passes the test before deciding to take it home:

- Make your meat selections last when you are in the supermarket to ensure that it stays cold until you get home
- Select cuts of beef that are bright red for best flavor with no splotches of gray or brown
- Make sure the packages are tightly wrapped with no tears or punctures in the package
- Meat should be firm to the touch.. not soft and cushy
- Meat should not have an unpleasant odor

You also need to know that meat is graded according to quality as USDA Prime, USDA Select and USDA Choice respectively.

The prime grade is only sold to restaurants.. the most widely sold grade to consumers is USDA Choice however with consumers being more health conscience, USDA Select is a widely sold grade as well.

I want to mention a few of the most popular smoking meats as well such as brisket and ribs since that is the ones you will most likely need to know best.

Brisket

When selecting a good brisket for smoking it is best to stick to a weight less than 10 pounds. To find the most tender brisket in the store, lay the brisket flat across the side of your hand to see how much it "bends". The most tender brisket will bend the most. It's that simple.

You want a brisket that has at least a 1/4 inch fat cap with white that is white or lightly cream colored and firm to the touch.

[Learn more about brisket](#)

Ribs

Ribs are generally sold as 3 and a half down which simply means 3.5 pounds or less. Look for ribs that have some nice marbling of fat on the top of the ribs, are a nice red color and are firm to the touch.

When I say ribs I am normally referring to spare ribs but the same rules apply to the back ribs or "baby backs" as well.

[Learn more about ribs](#)

Poultry

Chickens are best at around 2.5 to 3 pounds maximum and should be fresh (never frozen) and minimally processed (no added solution) for best flavor and tenderness.

Turkeys should be no larger than 12 pounds and minimally processed. Any larger than this and it stays in the danger zone for too long of a time and is considered unsafe practice. You should never stuff a turkey when it is to be smoked.. this aids in keeping the turkey in the danger zone for too long as well.

Off subject a little but the danger zone is between 40 and 140 degrees for all practical purposes and the time in this range should be minimized as much as possible.

[Learn more about smoking chicken](#)

[Learn more about smoking turkey](#)

For more meat safety guidelines, visit our website at smoking-meat.com

That is about it for the basics of meat selection.. tomorrow we will look at how to build a fire and maintain a steady temperature. Until then be sure to check out the [smoking-meat.com website](http://smoking-meat.com) for more tutorials on smoking meat. If you have any questions please feel free to drop me an email at jeff@smoking-meat.com or post your question at www.SmokingMeatForums.com

Please forward this course to your friends and family.

Part 2

Welcome to day 2 of my 5-Day Smoking Basics eCourse where I will be teaching you what I know about learning to smoke meat over an open flame. I have geared this course toward those who use charcoal or wood as a heat source as opposed to [propane](#), [electric](#), etc.

This second installment will deal with a very important aspect of smoking.. *creating the heat source* .

Building Your Fire

This is something that new smokers get frustrated with.. not necessarily the building of the fire because most of us are pretty good at that and it is extremely fun.. but the maintaining. Maintaining a consistent temperature in that smoker has got to be the most aggravating thing in the world for beginners.

Hopefully I will be able to give you some pointers here that will relieve some of that frustration and give you the skills you need to not only build a perfect fire but keep it up for hours on end.

Let me begin by saying that you should be using a good lump charcoal made from 100% hardwood as opposed to that briquette made of who knows what.

Lump charcoal will do you well.. trust me on that one!

I like to use the little paraffin fire starters which you simply light and lay down in the bottom of the charcoal pan or firebox. Arrange a pile of lump charcoal over the fire starter (the size of your pile will be directly proportionate to the size of your smoker and firebox). The average vertical Brinkmann or ECB (El Cheapo Brinkmann) will require about a 2 gallon bucket to get started.

You will then want to use a separate container to light another batch of lump charcoal in the same manner.. this will be used to replenish the coals in the charcoal pan or firebox in the smoker itself.

I want to detour for a minute here to explain a couple of mods you can do to the ECB to help it maintain a better temp and just burn better overall.

Mods for the ECB

The ECB does not have a smoke stack. It has a door which you can open or close to any degree to try and control the heat but this doesn't really work that well.

The first thing you want to do is take the charcoal pan and using a drill motor with a 1/8 inch drill, create a hole pattern in opposite sides of the pan. the pattern should be about 4 inches in diameter with the holes spaced at about 1/4 inch. This will allow more air into the charcoal pan creating a better burn.

You will also want to create a 4 inch round hole pattern in the lid of the ECB smoker in the same manner as before and with the same size drill. You will then need to cut a 5 inch round piece of light weight sheet metal or aluminum attached at one edge with a single sheet metal screw to allow it to swivel open and closed. This will be your outlet damper to control the flow of smoke from your smoker.

[Drop me a line](#) if you need further clarification on these mods to the ECB.

The Minion Method

A method that also seems to work well for maintaining a steady temp in the smoker is known as the minion method. This is simply loading your charcoal pan with charcoal and then placing red hot coals right on top of the unlit coals. As the red hot coals burn they slowly light the coals below and very steadily work their way to the bottom.

I have heard folks say they kept a vertical smoker going for 6 to 8 hours with little or no help using this method. If you are interested in learning more about this method, go to www.google.com and do a search for "minion method" in quotes. You will find lots of great information on the subject.

If you decide to just use the original method I mentioned above.. you will simply light the charcoal in the pan or firebox, light the charcoal in the extra container and as the smoke progresses you will add a few coals each 45 minutes to an hour from the container to the pan or firebox to maintain the right temperature which in most cases should be around 225 degrees.

Using the Water Pan

Ever wonder what the water pan is really for? It serves a couple of purposes one of which is the source of much debate. The first purpose is to help control the temp inside the smoker.

Water boils at 212 degrees.. as the water gets hot and begins to boil it starts putting off lots of steam which mixes with the air in the smoker and naturally strives to regulate the ambient temperature in the smoker to its own temperature just as ice in a warm glass of tea affects its surroundings and brings the temperature of the liquid down to a much colder state like itself.

The second purpose is something that is argued about quite a bit.. some believe that the steam creates moister air and that serves to keep the meat more moist in the smoker. I have not seen evidence of that personally but I will let you decide that for yourself.

Some smokers like to put various liquids in the water pan such as apple juice, wine, seasonings, etc which they believe influences the taste of the meat. There again.. I have no solid proof that it really works that way but you should try it for yourself and make your own decision.

That wraps up this session on building a fire and maintaining consistent temperature in the smoker. If you have any further questions allow me to direct you to our forum at www.smokingmeatforums.com where we have many seasoned experts ready and willing to answer your questions about smoking meat.

For more excellent tutorials, recipes, tips and advice, visit our website at smoking-meat.com

Tomorrow we will look at influencing the flavor of the meat which will include brining, marinating, mopping and the proper use of dry rubs and sauces. If you have any questions please feel free to drop me an email at jeff@smoking-meat.com or post your question at www.SmokingMeatForums.com

Be sure and forward this email to 10 of your closest friends for good luck..

Part 3

Welcome friends to day 3 of this 5-day course on the basics of smoking meat. Today we are looking at an extremely important part of smoking.. the imparting of flavor thru brining, marinating, rubbing, mopping and sauces.

Not let's look at each of these in detail.

Brining

Brining is a process in which you add salt and sugar and other flavorings to a bucket of water. You place the meat down in the water and in a very scientific attempt to equalize themselves, the salt, sugar, and flavorings are drawn deep into the meat along with the water.

The result is a more juicy flavorful piece of meat.

I only brine poultry and fish but some folks brine other cuts of meat as well and with some success. It is my opinion that tougher cuts of meat like brisket do not benefit from brining.

[Learn more about brining and get my personal brine recipe here](#)

Marinating

Marinating in my opinion serves to tenderize tough cuts of meat first and foremost. It also allows meat to draw flavor into itself which is always a good thing.

I like to use pineapple juice, orange juice, wines, lemon juice and even coca-cola to help marinate and flavor the meat but my main marinade is a bottle of italian dressing. It works so well that I rarely use anything else. Marinating is one of those things that you just have to experiment with to find your perfect combination. If you really want to get serious about marinating look into papaya juice.. they say this substance is so powerful that it can only stay on meat for a short period of time or it will actually make the meat "mushy".

Rubs

Ok..I am happy about marinating, I like to brine my poultry, I enjoy mopping the meat in the smoker immensely but there is one thing I get really excited about.. rubs!

Rubs do to meat what Elvis did to modern music!

If you are not in the practice of putting a rub on your meat then you are seriously missing out on some major flavor.

It is not difficult to apply but you do have to have a good rub. There are tons of rub recipes online and [on the website](#) and most of them are ok.. just ok but not superb. If you want a superb rub then you will have to order my own special concoction that I spent years perfecting... yes I am partial and yes I am a perfectionist and the rub is the best I have ever tasted hands down.

My rub recipe is **100% guaranteed**.. in other words you have nothing to lose! You order it and if it is not the best you have ever eaten simply destroy the recipe, let me know what you did not like about it and your refund will be on the way.

Click the link below to order:

[I want your Famous Rib Rub Recipe now](#)

Anyway.. get you a good rub.. somewhere.. and once you do, use it.

The best way to apply rub is to rub a thin layer of yellow mustard... the hotdog kind, all over the ribs or pork shoulder or brisket or whatever you are preparing and then sprinkle a coat of rub onto the meat. The mustard will lose its flavor during the smoking process but will leave a wonderful crust so full of flavor that you will not believe your taste buds.

Believe it or not.. I usually do not apply rub until right before the meat goes into the smoker but some folks like to apply the rub the night before and then wrap the meat in cellophane or other plastic wrap and place in the fridge.

Suit yourself on how you do it.. just do it before it goes into the smoker.

Mopping the Meat

You have to understand what long hours of heat must do to a hunk of meat.. the fat on the meat does a great job of basting the meat but sometimes you either do not have enough fat or you want to add some additional flavor and moisture to the meat.

Let me warn you not to mop until the rub has had a chance to adhere to the meat otherwise the mop will wash the rub off the meat and into the coals or waterpan below.

Normally around an hour or two is plenty of time to wait. A normal mopping schedule is every 45 minutes to an hour.

On my briskets I like to wait a few hours then mop every other hour with a special butter/cajun seasoning mop.. the resulting flavor is unbelievable.

Probably the most common mops are those with apple juice or vinegar as their main ingredients.

Sauces

If you are one of those who buys store bought bbq sauce then let me get you to step it up a notch and at least modify it a little with some Tabasco, molasses, honey, grape jelly, etc., you have to experiment to come up with the perfect mixture but you can single handedly take something that tastes like it was manufactured and make it taste almost homemade.

The perfect scenario is to make your own sauce fresh.. I am talking hot out of the sauce pan and served to your guests on the side. I do not believe in putting sauce on the meat prior to serving.. it covers up the incredible flavor of what you just spent so much time creating and furthermore.. good barbecue can be eaten with no sauce at all and be extremely juicy and flavorful.

I have a sauce recipe which is a great compliment to the rub recipe and I will not spend a lot of time talking about it only to say that if you want sauce and you want the best then you need to part with a measly \$9.95 and order my famous recipe now.

[I want your oh so good Barbecue and Finishing Sauce now](#)

The next best option is to create your own and that may take months or years to get it perfect but in the end it is extremely worth it.

That about covers it for all of the ways to impart flavor and juiciness to your meat.. [contact me](#) with any questions you may have or go the [smoking meat forums](#) and ask your question there.

My Special Gift to You..

OK.. lean in because I have something to say and I don't want it to go any further. This is between you and me.. OK?!!

I want you to have my special rib rub and barbecue sauce recipes so bad.. you are learning some things in this eCourse that has the potential of making you a very successful cook outside on the smoker.

The icing on the cake would be to get this proven rub and sauce recipes in your hands so you can hear the same kind of things I hear every time I make it.. stuff like, "wow!" or "Oh my God!.. **this is so goooood!**" or my personal favorite, "**How do I get a copy of that recipe?!!!"**

You will hear the same things and I want that for you so bad that I am going to offer you both recipes at a price that you cannot refuse.

The recipes have been selling on the site for \$29.95 for a good while then I decided to offer it to subscribers for \$9.95 each or \$18.95 for both..

Now..

I am pinching myself for doing this but here goes..

I am offering both recipes to you.. today.. as a special deal in this ecourse.. for only **\$14.95**

[Order Now](#) or continue reading..

This is a really good deal and best of all it comes with a guarantee.. if you decide that it is not the best you have ever had then let me know and I will refund your money.

Unbeatable deal and you know it!

This is just for you so please do not give this link or the recipes to anyone.. ok?!!

[Click here](#) to get the recipes before I change my mind!

If you have not read all of the great information at smoking-meat.com then feel free to do so for a great learning experience.

Enjoy!

Jeff Phillips

Part 4

Welcome friends to day 4 of this 5-day course on the basics of smoking meat. We had lots of fun yesterday looking at brines, mops, marinades and sauces but today we are going to look at some different types of smokers and other equipment that can take your smoking to the next level and that is a good thing!

Let's look at some different types of smokers beginning with the most common for beginners:

The Upright Water Smoker

There are some unique features in this type of smoker also known as a bullet smoker. It is basically an upright cylinder with two pans.. the lower pan holds the charcoal while the upper pan holds water or other liquid.

Why the water pan?

Well we all know that water boils at 212 degrees and with the fire below the water the liquid heats up and as the steam flows thru the inside of the smoker it effectively helps maintain a heat level that is

perfect for smoking.

We talked about some mods you can do to the ECB (el cheapo Brinkmann), the most widely used vertical water smoker, in the second installment of this eCourse so we will not be redundant here. I do have another link to give you.. if you really want to go all out and make your vertical water smoker into a smoking machine then check out this link:

<http://www.randyq.addr.com/ecb/ecbmods.html>

In the bullet smoker category you can also purchase models that operate with electricity or propane.. I will refrain from getting into these but if you want to learn more about them you can read more at the following links:

<http://www.smoking-meat.com/propane-smokers.html>

<http://www.smoking-meat.com/electric-meat-smoker.html>

We have to talk about the smokers with the offset firebox..

Horizontal Smoker With Offset Firebox

This is a fairly common type of smoker and with a few modifications it can make a great smoker.. I have a buddy who bought a huge wood smoker large enough to smoke several hundred pounds of meat yet he continues to use his smaller offset because he feels that it does a better job!

That is all a matter of personal preference.. in most cases however, you will need to install a baffle so that the heat coming directly into the smoker does not burn your meat closest to the firebox.

I am not a machinist or metal worker but it makes sense that you would need something to take the heat and disperse it evenly throughout the smoker instead of allowing it to be too hot at point of entry and too cool in the side furthest from the firebox.

The type of smoker uses lump charcoal as the fuel source.

The Big Wood Fired Smoker

I use a wood fired smoker which simply means it is very big and uses whole split logs as the fuel. This type of smoker is a lot of fun to use and is ideal for anyone wanting to smoke large amounts of meat. I have used mine to cook for several large groups in the Tulsa area and with great success.

I do not recommend a smoker this size for the person who only occasionally smokes for his immediate family but if you are looking to eventually do some catering or big time smoking cookoffs then you may need a large wood burning smoker.

Charcoal

The best type of fuel to use for your smoker is lump charcoal.. it is the purest form and will not have all of the additives that you find in briquettes. And while we are on the subject.. do not use lighter fluid, instead use wadded up newspaper to start your fire or get some of those fire starters that look like huge matches.. if you cannot find these [let me know](#) and I will try to get you more info.

Smoking Woods

This is where you get the flavor in smoked meat so choose your wood wisely and use it wisely.. as a beginner you should use wood sparingly and increase the amount you discover that you want more smoke flavor. Some of the most popular woods are hickory, mesquite, pecan, oak and apple.

Basically you can use any hardwood or wood that comes from fruit trees or nut trees. You do NOT want to use woods with a lot of sap like juniper, spruce, evergreen or any other coniferous woods such as pine.

I prefer chunks in my smaller smoker simply because they last longer than chips but you can successfully use chips by wrapping a handful in foil and then poking 2 or 3 holes in the top of the foil pouch and placing the pouch on top of the coals.

To get more info on what woods are used in smoking [click here](#)

Thermometers

I meet some boneheads every once in a while who act like they are too good to use a thermometer but you show me a true professional and he will be using a thermometer in most cases. Thermometers are like a hammer to a carpenter.. he could use his shoe or his hard hat if he is really talented but if he is wise and a professional he will have a proper hammer.

Thermometers are a tool that allow you to make sure that the meat is removed from the smoker at the perfect time. Using a thermometer I can remove that rack of ribs from the smoker at exactly 172 degrees every time I smoke and always have great results.. or I could guess at it and remove them at a

different temperature every time I smoke and sometimes they will be too done and sometimes not done enough and sometimes I may accidentally get them just right.

Bottom line.. spend \$15 dollars and get a good digital thermometer. I recommend getting the Taylor made model from Amazon like this one:

[Taylor Meat Thermometer](#)

Cooking Gloves

Unless you have hands made of steel you will need a good pair of cooking gloves... now I happen to have a pair that is cloth on the back side and rubber on the palm and fingers and that works great for me but you can find special made gloves for this purpose at Amazon.com or perhaps at your local barbecue supply house.

Here is a link to some that I see on the website if you are interested:

<http://www.smoking-meat.com/barbecue-supplies.html>

BBQ Tools

You may also want a good barbecue set and do me a favor.. do not use the tines of that big fork to pierce the meat! These barbecue tool sets usually come with a big metal spatula for flipping steaks on the grill, tongs to grab the meat and flip it over and even some skewers or anything else to fill up that 29 piece advertisement to make you think you are getting a great deal

You can pick these up anywhere.. at Wal-mart, Lowes, Home Depot, etc. for less than a 20 dollar bill or you can pay a little more and get a stainless steel set. Nice but not necessary.

Personally I use my gloves and rarely if ever use one of the tools but that, like so many other things in barbecue, is a matter of personal preference.

I have a barbecue tool set for sale on the website if you prefer to order it online..

<http://www.smoking-meat.com/barbecue-supplies.html>

Rib Racks

And last but most certainly not least... if you are a big rib connoisseur like me you will want a rib rack

to allow you to fit more ribs in your smoker as opposed to laying them flat.

There are expensive models that you can buy but I do just fine with the ones made by Weber. These can be purchased on the site at <http://www.smoking-meat.com/barbecue-supplies.html> or you may possibly be able to find them if you have a local ACE Hardware.

You may even find a rib rack at Lowes or Home Depot if you are lucky.

I have tried to list some of the most common things that you need to know concerning smokers and supplies.. if you know of something that you would like to see added to this part of the e-Course then simply [let me know](#) and I will see what I can do.

As always.. pass this on to all of your friends and keep smoking! (meat that is).

Jeff Phillips

Part 5

Today we are going to wrap up the 5-Day eCourse on the Basics of Smoking Meat and for our grand finale we are going to cover a couple of need to know topics concerning how to know when the meat is done and how to estimate cook times on various cuts of meat.. so.. with no further ado, let us get started!

When is it done? How do I estimate cook time?

I get asked these question over and over again and the answer is that it depends on what you are cooking/smoking. I will give you a few of the main cuts of meat that you will be starting out with most likely and my take on the perfect temperature for pulling the meat out of smoker.

Brisket, Pork Shoulder, Pork Butt (Boston Butt), Picnic

Slicing: 185 degrees

Pulling: 200 degrees

Visual Clues: Outside of meat will be very dark

Estimate brisket at 1.6 hours per pound at 225 degrees

Note: The pork shoulder, pork butt or picnic are excellent cuts of meat for beginners since these cuts are extremely forgiving. You can overcook or undercook within certain limits and the meat will still be very tasty and palatable.

For more information see the following links:

[Brisket Smoke](#)
[Carolina Pulled Pork Sandwich](#)

Spare Ribs

Perfect if pulled out of the smoker at 172 degrees

Visual Clues: Watch for meat to be pulling back from the bone ends

A rack of ribs will normally require around 6 hours to cook and become tender.

For more information see the following links:

[Smoking Ribs](#)
[Apple Smoke Spare Ribs](#)
[Smoked Rib Recipe](#)

Chicken, Turkey

Poultry should be pulled from the smoker when the temperature in the thickest part of the thigh reaches 170 degrees

Visual Clues: Skin will be golden brown and also legs will "shake hands" with you.. i.e. will be very loose and flexible.

A chicken will normally get done in 3 to 4 hours at 225 degrees.

Estimate the cook time of a turkey at 30 minutes per pound.. a 12 pound turkey should take around 6 hours but may take a little longer if the wind is up or if the weather is extremely cold.

For more information see the following links:

[Smoking Turkey](#)
[Smoking Chicken](#)

Remember to throw on some fatties or ABT's anytime you have the smoker going for a nice addition to any meal. Fatties are simply round logs of breakfast sausage such as Jimmy Dean's which you can place on the smoker for 2 to 3 hours for a nice smoky delight. You can even apply rub to the sausage and/or mop the sausage with you favorite mop during the smoking process.

To find out more about ABT's, [go to the forum](#) where you will find complete instructions along with several mouth watering photos.

This concludes our eCourse on the Basics of Smoking Meat.. I tried to add many of the things that beginners to the art would be needing to know and I hope I have covered things in enough detail to help you get started.

If you find that you have unanswered questions then either contact me or go the forum and ask the pros who are only too anxious to tell you how they do it.

Be sure and read all of the great tutorials at [Smoking-Meat.com](#), join the forum at [SmokingMeatForums.com](#) and pass this eCourse and website link on to all of your friends and family.

I have enjoyed this time we have spent together learning more about smoking meat.. and until next time..

Keep on Smokin' (Meat that is)!

Jeff Phillips

[Smoking-Meat.com](#)

[SmokingMeatForums.com](#)