

## [Smoking Brisket and Making Burnt Ends](#)

### What You'll Need

- 10-12 lb Brisket
- 1 can of beef broth
- Heavy duty foil
- Large foil pan
- Olive oil
- 1 batch of [Jeff's rub](#)
- 1 batch of [Jeff's sauce](#)

When choosing a brisket, I tend to go for the ones in the 10-12 pound range that are untrimmed (usually labeled "Packer Brisket"). Look for a hard, white fat cap on one side.



While it is nice to buy top quality meat, including briskets, that carry the prime or wagyu label, true barbecue is about being able to take the lower quality pieces of meat and turning them into something really wonderful using fire, smoke and seasonings.

Briskets are usually relatively flat on one end (the flat) and thicker at the other end (the point).

The flat is great for slicing but the point has more fat, takes longer to render out and is separated from the flat by a thick layer of fat.

## How to Prepare the Brisket for Smoking

Start off by making a [batch of rub](#) and a [batch of sauce](#).. it's really simple and really, really good and it's a great way to turn ordinary brisket into WOW! moments. I actually recommend that you make the sauce a day ahead and put it in the fridge to sort of "steep". The taste on the 1st day is really good but it's even better the 2nd day.



I usually trim briskets a little making sure to leave only about 1/4 inch of fat cap but this time I decided to go with the "no trim" version. With the thick fat cap on one side, it made no sense to put seasoning on that side for now so I just put my rub on the meat side.

*Why "no trim" version?*

*Some folks recently have been claiming that the secret to a really juicy brisket is to put the brisket in the smoker with ALL of the fat intact and I wanted to try it and see if it really made a huge difference over my usual method.*

It is very important that the brisket flat be sliced across the grain once it's finished cooking. To make this easy, look at the grain direction before you season the meat and

slice a corner off of the brisket perpendicular to the grain direction as a marker. (*notice bottom right corner of picture*)



To make the rub stick to the meat you can use mustard or almost anything wet for that matter. I decided to brush on some olive oil. A shaker bottle with large 1/8 inch holes or larger is ideal for sprinkling on the rub evenly.



With large briskets being a bit cumbersome to move around, I decided to smoke it on a [Bradley rack](#) to make it really easy to get into and out of the smoker. I left it laying on the cabinet for a few minutes while I went out and fired up the "[Big Block](#)" [Great Outdoors Smoky Mountain propane smoker](#).



Notice the "Fat Cap Down" orientation.. this is so as to not disturb the rub on the meat side. This brisket should be fat cap down throughout the entire time it is in the smoker.

## Getting the Smoker Ready

If you are using a wood or charcoal smoker then I recommend that you get it going first then, while it is coming up to temperature, you can season the brisket and get it ready. Since I am using my propane smoker, it's very easy to get it going and doesn't take more than 10-15 minutes so I just waited until I was ready. I already had the chip box full of mesquite chips (gotta go "Texas" all the way on this) and the water pan full of water. The grates were clean and ready to go so all I had to do was turn on the propane and light the burner.

I have had my Great Outdoors Smoky Mountain "Big Block" smoker for about 10 years or so and it still works as good as the day I bought it. It just doesn't look as good.

The great thing about this particular type and model of smoker is that it is easy to use, creates a killer smoke ring and awesome "wood smoker like" flavor, only needs to be checked about every 2 hours or so to replenish wood chips and water and is big enough to cook for a small army. Amazon has these [available with free shipping](#).

They don't call it the "Big Block" anymore and they've made a few changes to the smoker since I purchased mine but it's an awesome smoker none the less and will give you years and years of great service and great food.



[Check this smoker out on Amazon.com](#)

To get this smoker ready to smoke, turn the propane bottle on about a full turn, turn the big temperature knob on the right to "High" to make the propane start flowing then turn the left knob several clicks until it lights.

Leave the smoker set on High for about 5 minutes to heat the metal up and get the chips going.

While it's heating up, fill the heavy duty chip box almost all the way to the top with your choice of wood chips and place it into it's carriage just above the burner. I chose mesquite since we are doing brisket but you can use whatever you like. A full box should provide smoke on medium heat for about 2 hours. You should also pour about a gallon of water in the water pan at this time.



The High heat helps to get the wood chips to smoking, heats the water so it will start producing steam and heats the metal walls of the smoker so it will hold a steady temperature.

While the smoker is still set on High, get the Bradley rack with the brisket and place it on one of the grates then quickly shut the door. I placed mine on the grate that was closes to the door thermometer so I would be getting accurate temperature readings at grate level.



Once you see and smell the smoke coming out of the chimney, you can turn the heat down to a more medium setting or whatever is required to maintain your goal temperature. I usually recommend 225 all the way through for brisket but in this experiment, I am getting a little wild and crazy and taking it to 250 degrees in hopes of getting this thing done a little faster than usual.

*Vent Settings: Top and side vents are all set to 1/4 open*

## Smoking the Brisket

Sit back and relax for about 5 hours making sure to keep the smoke going by adding chips when the smoke stops and adding more water if it needs it.

*Note: Add very hot water to the water pan to maintain your heat in the smoker. Adding cold water will steal some of your Btu's initially to heat the water and your temperature will drop. Adding hot water, reduces this effect.*

Here's my relaxing spot.. notice the mason jars full of iced tea, smart phone at the ready so I can answer incoming email and keep notes on the brisket, remote thermometer so I don't have to get up to check the temperature and the pan with foil top ready for once the brisket hits 150 degrees. I also have tunes playing in the background.. That's just how I roll;-)



## 150 Degrees.. Pan time

Sometimes I leave the brisket on the grate the entire time, and other times I place it in a pan for the entire time. I have developed a hybrid of that process in hopes of getting the best of both worlds by smoking it directly on the grates until it hits about 150 degrees then transferring it to a pan covered with foil for the remaining time.

You could also just wrap it in foil if you don't have a pan but I have found that the foil pans work so much better and they prevent LEAKS!

When the brisket hits 150 degrees as measured in the flat end of the brisket (not the point), place it fat side down in the foil pan, pour a can of beef broth down in the pan around the brisket making sure you don't disturb the rub on the meaty side then cover it with foil. Do this quickly so as to not lose any more heat than you have to.



By placing the brisket in the pan and covering it with foil, it seems to cook faster, and the stall is so much less than it would be otherwise.

*The stall is what we call that period of time where large cuts such as brisket and pork shoulder seem to get stuck and stop cooking. This normally happens at around 150-160 degrees for me. I have had stalls that lasted up to 4 hours or more and eventually it will start climbing up again. There is much discussion as to what causes this and how to prevent it but I have discovered that foil helps so I don't have to get all scientific to just "do what works" and help it along.*



Going forward, just keep maintaining your smoker at 250 degrees as we did in the beginning but you do not need to continue adding wood chips since the foil will prevent the smoke from flavoring the meat anyway. So unless you just want to smell it, you don't need to add any more.

Continue keeping the water pan full of water since it acts as a heat sink as well as a means of blocking direct heat from below.

Let the brisket cook completely undisturbed until it reaches 195-200 degrees. I prefer 200 degrees but if you want to check it for fork tenderness at 195, feel free to do so.

Once it reaches the finished temperature, remove the pan from the smoker, and let it sit with the foil just partially covering or tented over the brisket for about 30 minutes to let the meat rest. During this time, the juices will redistribute throughout the meat.

If you have plenty of time and want to further tenderize the meat, you can pour off some of the juices then quickly re-cover the meat with foil, wrap the pan in a thick towel and place it in an empty ice cooler for an hour or two. Fill in any remaining space in the cooler with more towels, blankets, pillows or whatever you can find to insulate it and help it to hold its heat.



Once the brisket had rested, remove it from the pan and set it on a cutting board fat side down. The pan will be full of juices consisting of rendered fat, beef broth and other meat juices.



Remember that corner we cut off so we would know which way to slice it? Well, this is where that becomes very valuable. Cut a 1/4 inch slice from that same corner and marvel at the beautiful smoke ring.



Once you're done being proud of yourself, use a long, sharp knife and separate the flat end from the point end. Some separate the meat horizontally but I like to just cut it in half then it's easier to work with.



There will be a 1/2 inch fat layer on the bottom of the flat end, remove it with the long knife and then slice the meat into 1/4 inch pieces at a 45 degree angle. These slices will be meaty with almost no fat on them. Great for sandwiches or whatever.



### **Now for the Burnt Ends.. Finally!!**

This is what you've been waiting for and all of the previous steps are necessary to get us to this point. But as you will see, it's so worth it.

The point end has a layer of fat that runs along the bottom of it and another thick layer through the center. I like to run a long, sharp knife horizontally through the center of the point separating the top half from the bottom half.

Then you can remove the fat layer from the bottom of the bottom layer.



The point can now be cut into 1 inch cubes on the cutting board and placed into a foil pan. Generously sprinkle my rub all over the cubed brisket point and stir to coat.



At this point you can cook them a couple of different ways:

### **Option 1: Burnt Ends Made In the Smoker**

Mix about a cup of my sauce into the cubed brisket pieces (more or less depending on how many burnt ends you have and they shouldn't be overly saucy in my opinion) then place the uncovered pan in the smoker at 250 degrees for about 2 hours for more smoke, more fat rendering and a little char around the edges.

Stir the pieces every 30 minutes and add another good sprinkle of my rub each time. When the pieces are dark to your liking, and they taste like heaven, they are finished.

## Option 2: Burnt Ends Made On the Grill

This is my favorite way to do it and they get done pretty fast this way.. plus I just like to fire up my grill every once in a while and listen to the fat sizzling on the bottom of the pan.

Place the pan on the grill over high heat stirring them every 5 minutes or so making sure the bottom gets to char a little but not burn. Add a good sprinkle of the rub about every 15 minutes or so until they start to darken to your liking.

Once they are almost done, mix in about 1 cup of my barbecue sauce (depending on how many burnt ends you have. I don't like them to be real saucy.) 1 cup was perfect for the amount that I had.

Continue cooking and stirring until they are perfectly done to your liking and the color is right.



## Summary

- Make a batch of [Jeff's rub and sauce](#)
- Place brisket on cutting board with fat cap down
- Slice off a small corner perpendicular to grain direction to mark for slicing
- Brush olive oil onto the meat side
- Sprinkle on a generous layer of Jeff's rub
- Place brisket fat cap down onto a Bradley rack for easy transport

- Prepare smoker for cooking at 250 degrees with mesquite chips recommended
- Place Bradley rack with brisket onto grate (maintain fat cap down throughout)
- Smoke for about 5 hours or until it reaches 150 degrees (measured in the flat end)
- Quickly place brisket in foil pan (fat side down)
- Pour 1 can of beef broth into bottom of pan and cover with foil
- Put pan of brisket back into smoker and maintain 250 degrees
- Once brisket reaches 200 degrees, remove from smoker and uncover slightly to cool
- Let the brisket rest for about 30 minutes
- Separate flat from point
- Slice flat into slices following our mark that we made by cutting off the corner
- Trim excess fat from point and cut into 1-inch cubes
- Place cubes into pan and sprinkle generously with Jeff's rubf and 1 cup of Jeff' sauce
- Cook cubed meat in smoker for about 2 hours or on the grill over high heat
- When the correct amount of caramelizing and darkness is achieved, they are done.
- Eat and enjoy

### **Brisket Cooking Graph Using This Hybrid Method of "Grate then Pan"**

I kept good notes on how the temperature of the brisket moved over time and I thought you might find it interesting to see how the foil almost completely eliminated the stall. Once in the foil at 11:45 it had a small recovery time but then it climbed at a pretty steep pitch all the way up to 180 degrees where it slowed down just a little but still stayed steady.

