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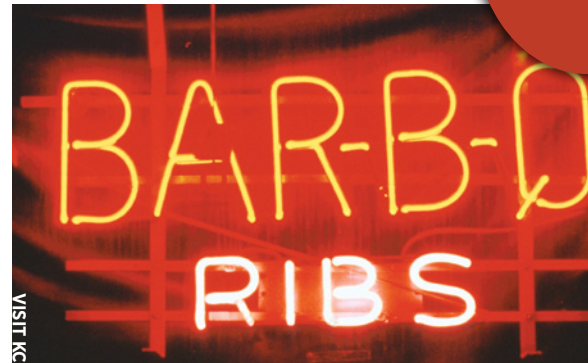
Kansas City

WHERE ON EARTH

KANSAS CITY

'CUE AND BREW

by LAURA SUTHERLAND



WE'D FINISHED EVERY LAST BITE OF THE BURNT

ends — Kansas City's barbecue morsels that are dished onto a soft white pillow of bread and smothered in tangy BBQ sauce. Each one was perfect, with a crispy char surrounding the tender and meaty insides and a generous lacing of fat running through.

A couple of lonely ribs lingered on a platter in front of us, but we were beyond full. We would have taken them home for later, but we were hoping to make at least one more BBQ stop before the night was over.

If you want to eat BBQ in Kansas City, you have to pace yourself — there are more than 100 BBQ joints in this historic meatpacking and music hub of the Midwest. The mingled influence of virtually every American BBQ style is found here — Memphis, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Texas versions — with ribs, brisket, chicken, turkey, and pork rubbed with a spicy blend, smoked with hickory, oak or pecan wood, and then slathered in a rich tomato-y sauce.

But above all, Kansas City's BBQ trademark is those burnt ends — the deeply flavoured charred bits from the fatty end of a beef brisket, where the meat juices build up and the smoky flavour intensifies. And we'd waited to order them until we got to L.C.'s laid-back roadside joint on the east side of town. L.C.'s is just what you'd imagine in a BBQ joint — formica-topped tables, piles of paper napkins, and enough squeeze bottles of BBQ sauce on the tables»

PHOTOS THIS SPREAD FROM LEFT Arthur Bryant's regular; Kansas City neon; Gates B-B-Q Platter; Spice rubs display; Brick pits at Woodyard Bar-B-Que.



Cook



SERVES 6-8

Kansas City Potato Salad

THIS POTATO SALAD has a Kansas City kick thanks to adding a spice mix to the water and BBQ sauce to the dressing. You can use just about any rub and BBQ sauce, but if you want to be really authentic, use the recipe for sauce on the opposite page.

DRY RUB

Brown Sugar ½ cup

Paprika ¼ cup

Black Pepper 1 Tbs

Celery Salt 1 Tbs

Chili Powder 1 Tbs

Garlic Powder 1 Tbs

Onion Powder 1 Tbs

Cayenne 1 tsp

1 MIX all. Store unused dry rub in an airtight container.

POTATO SALAD

Baby Potatoes 3 lbs, cut into ½" pieces

Kansas City Dry Rub 3 Tbs

Salt 1 tsp

Kansas City Barbecue Sauce ¼ cup

Canola Oil 3 Tbs

Cider Vinegar 2 Tbs

Prepared Mustard 2 tsp

Celery chopped, 1 cup

Red Onion finely sliced, ⅔ cup

Fresh Parsley finely chopped, ⅓ cup

Freshly Ground Black Pepper ½ tsp

2 PLACE the potatoes in a large saucepan and cover with water. Stir dry rub and 1 tsp salt into the water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer 8-12 minutes or until tender. Drain.

3 COMBINE BBQ sauce, canola oil, vinegar and mustard in a large bowl and whisk together. Add warm potatoes and toss to coat.

4 ADD the celery, onion, parsley and pepper and toss to combine. Season with more salt if desired. Let stand 20 minutes; serve at room temperature.

«so you can douse every single bite without fighting with your neighbour over the bottle. To make it even better, the smoker sits inside the restaurant, so you can see the pitmasters poking and turning the meat and stoking the fire while rich, smoky aromas float around the restaurant.

By then we already had two of Kansas City's hometown favourites under our belts — Arthur Bryant's and Gates Bar B.Q. Both trace their roots to a man named Henry Perry, who in 1904 threw whatever meats he could find into his smoker — pork, opossum, beef, squirrel — and sold his BBQ from a cart in a trolley barn. By 1908 he was serving up succulent slow-cooked ribs on sheets of newspaper for 25 cents. His business kept growing, so he opened a restaurant and hired brothers Charlie and Arthur Bryant to help. When Perry died, Charlie Bryant and later Arthur took over the business. Locals filled the tables for decades, but when New Yorker magazine writer Calvin Trillan stopped by Arthur Bryant's in the 1970s and called it the "single best restaurant in the world," Kansas City BBQ was on the map.

The original Arthur Bryant's doesn't look like it's changed that much over the years. Photos of presidents and celebrities still line the walls and hearty eaters from every walk of life — policemen, sales clerks, business leaders, tourists, families from the neighbourhood, and construction workers — sit down with plates piled high with ribs and chicken, big bowls of brisket-laced beans, and of course, burnt ends. There is nothing green in sight, although coleslaw is on the menu — but never once did I see it on anyone's plate in a Kansas City BBQ restaurant.

Gates Bar-B-Q, just around the corner from Arthur Bryant's, was opened in 1946 by one of Perry's early cooks and his buddy George Gates, whose family still runs it today. Their barbecue sauce has a slightly different flavour than Bryant's, but it's still all Kansas City — rich, tomatoey, sweet, and tangy with deeper notes of cumin, celery, and garlic. Both Gates and Bryant's have a full menu of classic BBQ items, and the tender and smoky ribs from the two establishments consistently land on the top five list for best ribs in the US.

If you don't have much time in Kansas City, swap out lunch and dinner for a four-hour, four-stop afternoon BBQ tour on KC BBQ Tours' refurbished school bus. You get to ride around in air-conditioned plush-seated comfort while you hear the back story and gossip about the BBQ places you're going to visit while listening to a lively sound track of Kansas City jazz and blues.

KC BBQ Tours also offers a Cue & Brew Tour where you bring the beer of your choice and they


bus you in style to three different BBQ places. If you're a craft beer lover, that's one way to savour Kansas City's burgeoning craft brew scene along with the town's best BBQ. We expected to see lots of local brews on tap at the various BBQ joints we visited, but most offered only mainstream American beer and sodas to drink. Fiorella's Jack Stack BBQ restaurant was an exception, with craft beers on tap from Boulevard, Kansas City's oldest and biggest craft brewery.

Boulevard's gold medal-winning American-style wheat beer, Boulevard Unfiltered Wheat, is the best-selling craft beer in the Midwest. You can taste it and a number of their other beers on a free tour of the brewery or just stop in at the brewery's suds-filled tasting room to sample a rotating lineup of year-round core beers, seasonal offerings, and brewery-exclusive test beers.

Our top-pick craft beers were from the Hop Maven series at Cinder Block Brewery where the Back Rack Grill BBQ Food Truck shows up Thursday through Saturday complete with meat smoker mounted to the truck. Outside food is also welcome, so you can brown bag it from any local BBQ place, but if you want your ribs piping hot and your beer frosty and cold, this is the place to go.

We managed to pair more 'cue and brew at McCoy's Public House, a small brewery so popular that their beer sells out as fast as they can make it. Order ribs from their sister restaurant, The CharBar next door, and they walk over plates piled high with slabs of saucy, smoky, finger-licking goodness. There is more on the menu than BBQ, too, like four different spins on mac and cheese, smoked corn succotash, and a grilled pimento cheese sandwich with fried green tomatoes.

Of course there were dozens more BBQ places we didn't get to,

but we still felt that we'd done a good job of sampling every type of smoked meat in town. After we'd stuffed ourselves silly at Woodyard B-B-Q, our last stop, I grabbed a stack of napkins and rubbed my hands hard, but no matter how many I used, I still couldn't get the deep smoky smell and the silky greasy feel of barbecue off my hands. Not that I really minded. I wanted to remember Kansas City's BBQ as long as possible. 

Visit

Arthur Bryant's
www.arthurbryantsbbq.com

Boulevard Brewing Company
www.boulevard.com

Cinderblock Brewery
www.cinderblockbrewery.com

Fiorella's Jack Stack Barbecue
www.jackstackbbq.com

Gates Bar-B-Q
www.gatesbbq.com

KC BBQ Tours
www.kcbarbecuetours.com

LC's Barbecue
www.lcsbarbecue.com

McCoy's Public House
www.mccoyskc.com

Woodyard B-B-Q
www.woodyardbbq.com

LAURA SUTHERLAND is a travel writer based in Northern California.

...ABOVE ALL, KANSAS CITY'S BBQ TRADEMARK IS THOSE BURNT ENDS...



MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS

Kansas City BBQ Sauce

Butter 2 Tbs

Yellow Onion finely chopped, 1 cup

Garlic 4 cloves, minced

Ketchup 2 cups

Molasses 1/3 cup

Brown Sugar 1/3 cup

Apple Cider Vinegar 1/3 cup

Yellow Mustard 2 Tbs

Chili Powder 1 Tbs

Freshly Ground Black Pepper 1 tsp

Cayenne 1/2 tsp

- MELT** the butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until softened — about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds.
- ADD** the ketchup, molasses, brown sugar, vinegar, mustard, chili powder, black pepper and cayenne and stir to combine. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and simmer until slightly thickened, about 30 minutes, stirring often.
- TRANSFER** sauce to a blender or food processor and blend until smooth. Let cool to room temperature and transfer to a jar. The sauce should be stored in the refrigerator and is good for up to a month.