

Barbeque is primal, basic. And in its timelessness lies its appeal. Consider that prehistoric man's greatest discovery was fire; how long could it have been after that before he had his buddies over for barbeque? We instinctively respond barbeque because it stirs all the subconscious urges piled up over millions of years, through countless ancestors, all appreciative of a good burnt end.

Year upon year, impression upon impression, the generations change. But that basic passion, the drive to nourish ourselves is elemental. And though it never changes, our choices do. We start with mother's milk. Soft stuff is next, then forks and knives. We load up on junk food. We go to a few fancy restaurants. We eat all kinds of things. We get "experience" and the joy and cynicism that it brings. We've had it all, food-wise.

Yet there are people out there who toil for countless hours, over smoking grills, to create one kind of nourishment unique in technique and appeal, in flavor and appearance. Passion drives these people. Passion drawn out over hours, savored for its lengthy, pleasurable, full-of-promise exercise. There is a sweet expectation of exhilarating sensory thrills. And we're talking about food here! Barbeque!

Barbeque devotees become animated in descriptions of perfect pork shoulder, shaved thin and piled high. Grown men have been moved to tears when detailing the texture and aroma, the sensual explosion, of perfectly prepared brisket. Sausage, poultry, fish – each is capable of inducing rapture. Any and all, done properly, can make one swoon.

There is great danger in this quest. Passion unleashed is powerful stuff. Once exposed to the sensory deluge of true barbeque, mortals risk barbeque addiction. It starts with slight twinges. A fancy dinner party that seemed a great idea bogs down under the memory of a perfectly smoked slab. A trip to a swank restaurant goes sour when thoughts of a saucy tenderloin invade the mind. (Did a whiff of hickory slip in here?)

Signs of addiction: Business meetings are missed when the truant orders "just one more" side of smoked sausage. A telltale haze of orange appears under usually clean fingernails; cuticles go bad with color. Late night trips crop up on unspecified "errands." Cold sweat forms on the brow upon seeing Miss Piggy on TV. Finally, hardware and hardwood invade the home. The wondrous cycle is complete.

Hardcore barbequers know this cycle. They know and love it. Most can recount, in detail, their early experiences with the big "Q." Recent converts are thrilled with their progression through grilling and on to the hard stuff. They lament the lack of the smoky, savory stuff in certain cities. Their immersion in barbeque becomes something comforting to grasp in troubled times.

Passion drives these people to revert to the most basic of all cooking methods – meat over fire. Passion brings them back again and again, a passion as real as its cousin, romance.

Let the Passion inspire you.