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CAROLINA PULLED PORK
(RECIPE, P. 110)



THE GASTRONAUT FILES

pulled pork

Chef Sean Brock of McGrady's in Charleston is a Carolina-barbecue scholar, too. Here, his grill-and-oven method for Carolina pulled pork, plus three key sauces.

AT MCGRADY'S IN CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, Sean Brock is known for intricate dishes like peekytoe crab with saffron, apple and wood sorrel. But the chef, who will open an all-Southern restaurant called Sazerac this fall, has an abiding love for Carolina barbecue. He even wrote a 20-page paper on its origins as a culinary student at Johnson & Wales University. "And that is a big darn paper for a chef to write," he says.

Carolina barbecue, Brock explains, traces its roots to the 16th century, when the first Spanish settlers brought pigs to the region and observed Native Americans slow-

cooking whole animals on spits. "If you're eating Carolina barbecue, you know you're eating pork," Brock says.

That pork traditionally comes off a whole hog turned slowly over coals. "I like the lore of the whole pig," Brock says, "but for fat-to-meat ratio and flavor, there is no better cut than the shoulder." The smaller cut is also easier to cook: Whereas pit masters tend their fires for days, Brock leaves the shoulder in a 275° oven overnight, then smokes it for an hour in his backyard grill. Turn the page for this simplified method for pulled pork, and three classic Carolina sauces. —Emily Kaiser

CAROLINA PULLED PORK

Traditional Carolina barbecue begins with a whole hog smoked over coals; here, Sean Brock cooks pork shoulder for 12 hours in a 275° oven before smoking it for about 1 hour in a backyard grill.

ACTIVE: 1 HR; TOTAL: 14 HR

12 TO 14 SERVINGS

- 1 cup Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons dark brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons freshly ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon sweet paprika
- 1 tablespoon onion powder

One 12- to 14-pound bone-in pork shoulder, with skin

About 50 hardwood charcoal briquettes

- 8 cups small hardwood smoking chips, soaked in water for 30 minutes and drained

Eastern Carolina Sauce or Variations, for serving (recipes follow)

1. Preheat the oven to 275°. In a medium bowl, whisk the mustard with the brown sugar, salt, pepper, paprika and onion powder. Set the pork shoulder, fat side up, in doubled 14-by-18-inch disposable aluminum roasting pans. Brush the pork with the mustard mixture. Roast, uncovered, for 12 hours, until the meat is very tender and is pulling away from the shoulder bone.

2. Tilt the pan and pour the roasting juices into a medium bowl; you should have about 1¼ cups. Refrigerate the juices for 30 minutes. Skim off the fat before using.

3. Meanwhile, light 10 of the charcoal briquettes. When the coals are hot, cover them with the remaining 40 briquettes. When all the coals are hot, arrange 6 cups of the soaked wood chips around the coals. Set the roasting pan on the grill grate over the coals and wood chips. Cover the grill, partially open the air vents and smoke the pork shoulder for 30 minutes.

4. Carefully remove the pork and the grill grate and stir the coals a few times. Scatter the remaining 2 cups of soaked wood chips over the coals. Replace the grill grate and return the pork to the grill. Cover and smoke for 30 minutes longer.

5. Transfer the pork to a work surface and let rest for 30 minutes. Pull the meat off of the bones; discard the bones, gristle, skin and fat. Using tongs and a fork, or your fingers, finely shred the meat and transfer it to a large bowl. Toss the shredded meat with ¼ cup of the reserved roasting juices and serve with one of the three barbecue sauces below.

MAKE AHEAD The smoked pork shoulder can be prepared through Step 4 and refrigerated overnight. Break the pork into 4-inch pieces and bring to room temperature. Arrange the pork in a roasting pan, drizzle with ½ cup of water, cover with foil and rewrap in a 425° oven before shredding.

WINE Smoky, ripe Santa Barbara Syrah: 2006 Lincourt.

Three Essential Carolina Barbecue Sauces

Carolina pulled pork comes with one of three distinct sauces, each from a different region. Each has its fanatical, occasionally militant supporters, but Brock has nice things to say about them all (and easy recipes, too).

EASTERN CAROLINA SAUCE In a medium bowl, combine 1 cup of the reserved roasting juices (from Carolina Pulled Pork, above) with 1 cup white wine vinegar and 1 cup cider vinegar. Add 1 tablespoon dark brown sugar and 1 tablespoon sweet smoked paprika, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Season with salt, pepper and hot sauce and serve.

WESTERN CAROLINA VARIATION Make the Eastern Carolina Sauce. Stir in 1 cup ketchup. Simmer over moderate heat for 30 minutes, until thickened. Season with salt and pepper.

SOUTH CAROLINA VARIATION Make the Eastern Carolina Sauce. Stir in 1 cup yellow mustard. Simmer over moderate heat for 30 minutes, until thickened slightly. Season with salt and pepper.



eastern carolina
Brock says the tangy sauce dates to the 1500s, when Spanish settlers in coastal North Carolina seasoned their pork with a hit of vinegar.



western carolina
Since at least World War I, cooks in western North Carolina (a.k.a. the Piedmont) have enriched sauces with tomatoes or ketchup.



south carolina
South Carolina cooks simmer their sauce with mustard, an innovation likely introduced by German settlers in the 19th century.