

SMOKED BBQ PORK RIBS

1. Peel off membrane on underside of ribs. Start at one corner using a knife and in one clean sweep, peel it off, use a paper towel for better grip. This allows the smoke to better penetrate the meat and give it more flavor.
2. Massage the ribs all over with dry rub and let stand at room temperature, covered loosely with plastic wrap, for 1 hour. If not in any time pinch, the best is to place them in the refrigerator overnight.
3. For good smokehouse flavor, bring out the wood! Soak the chips/chunks in water for at least an hour. For my ribs, I prefer the pecan flavor and sometimes hickory. Many of my Yankee friends have used apple, and though it is delicious in its own right, a true Texan would never do this.
4. I smoke my ribs using a vertical water smoker. In this setup imagine a standing cylinder, the fire is at the bottom, a water pan is at the middle, and the meat is up top followed by a domed lid. This method creates beautiful moist, hot smoke needed for cooking. I prepare a chimney of hot coals at the bottom, and then place another layer of unlit coals (~15) on top of them. Next, I throw on some presoaked wood, then place a full water pan above it. The ribs go on last. A rib rack may be needed to maximize space if cooking more than one rack.
5. Cover and let cook, checking on the temperature every 45 minutes or so. I want the temperature to stay around 225; however, I definitely don't want it below 200 or above 250. To accomplish the proper temperature, I'll frequently add unlit coals and wood to increase it, or open the lid momentarily to lower it. Smoke them for 4 ½ - 5 hours. Many times I place an oven thermometer next to my ribs to get an accurate temperature of the heat around the meat. In my experience, the ones inserted into the lids can sometimes be misleading.
6. Remove and let rest for a few minutes. Cut with an electric knife and serve with your favorite BBQ sauce. If you wish to baste them with BBQ sauce, don't do so until the last 30 – 40 minutes of cooking time so the sauce does not burn on the meat.

Two tips:

1. When cooking the ribs in the vertical smoker, it is always easier to increase the temperature than it is to lower it; therefore, be patient and never add too much unlit coals or wood at one time.
2. There are many recipes for “dry rubs.” Salt Lick makes a good one and Grub Rub out of Academy gets high marks. I have my own favorite, which is a 15 ingredient, tried and tested personal recipe...but I can't tell you.

Now that you know the method to smoke them, make sure to prepare a few racks because your neighbors downwind will definitely be coming by to “visit.”