

WINTER SMOKE



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Now that our planet has made its adjustment into the winter Solstice, and we are immersed in those gray, cold, blustery days of winter, many of us are waiting impatiently for the spring Equinox to arrive.

What must go through our minds as we peer through the frosted window to see the old barbecue pit covered over with snow?

Many of us die-hard grillers will simply, and without giving it a second thought, shovel a path to the smoker, brush the snow off and fire it up as our neighbors watch in amazement.

But, what if you shun the freezing temperatures and prefer to remain one of the 98% who hibernate all winter living on casseroles and soup? You know, the ones who wait patiently for Memorial Day, the unofficial start of summer, to once again venture outside and start-up the old grill.

Forget the temperature! Instead take a deep breath, bundle up, and head into the cold outdoors in search of outstanding local barbecue – St. Louis Style. Go ahead, the car will get warm and the restaurants usually have heat too.

Winter is a great time to visit some of the regions outstanding local barbecue establishments. And St. Louis has its share of some of the best.

Although there are many to choose from, one can simply look on-line to see what is close to home. One is likely only minutes from your door. But, if you need a recommendation I have two to suggest, especially if you don't mind a short drive.

My first recommendation is Super Smokers. You can visit their restaurant in Eureka, MO. Owner, Terry Black, is a World Champion Pitmaster – the only one in these parts.



Terry's cooking skills have received worldwide recognition. This includes winning top honors at the Memphis in May World Barbecue Championship in 2000. An outstanding accomplishment considering his win was south of the Mason-Dixon Line and the level of competition this Yankee had to face, to say the least, was extreme!

The same expertise and passion he brought to this competition carries on in his restaurant. In my view Super Smokers signature dish is their apple-smoked baby back ribs. The ribs are cooked with a careful

combination of spices, gently applied and smoked over an apple wood-fire. The result is a tasty but mild and sweet compliment to the tender meat. Other offerings on the menu are just as outstanding.



A weekly visit for lunch or dinner at Super Smokers is a great way to pass the winter months. For more information please go to www.supersmokers.com.

My other recommendation is Hicks BBQ on South Illinois Street in Belleville.



The Memphis region's world class barbecue, and the smoky oak and mesquite flavors of central and north Texas, have nothing on Hicks. Best of all you don't have to travel far to enjoy it. Located just a short drive from Downtown St. Louis, Hicks is a treasure for any barbecue enthusiast.

While other establishments may garner more publicity, Hicks holds its own with outstanding Southern Apple Wood Smoked BBQ. Just enough smoke in their pit creates a truly signature taste.

I hesitate to share this but I've never ordered Hicks apple smoked ribs. I've seen others enjoy them, and they always look incredible. When I get an opportunity to eat at Hicks, how do you pass up the best brisket and one pound smoked pork steaks in St. Louis?



Hicks is award winning, family owned and operated. In all it is truly incredible barbecue. For more information please go to www.hicksbbqcompany.com.

On a final note, if you are a serious Pit Master that doesn't let a little thing like subzero temperatures or nosy laughing neighbors stop you from venturing out-of-doors to fire up the grill, let me offer you some sage advise. The key to consistent temperature, regardless of weather conditions, is a well-constructed, heavy gage barbecue pit/smoker. Heavy gage pits hold and maintain temperature much better than their inexpensive cousins. Maintaining a consistent temperature with light wood-produced smoke is the key to outstanding smoke flavored barbecue no matter what the season. And, to get you started in the right direction visit the knowledgeable experts at St. Louis Home Fires on Manchester Road in Ballwin.

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ST. LOUIS HOME FIRES



St. Louis Home Fires showcases some of the finest grills and smokers in the country. Owner Frank Schmer would be delighted to work with you to select the best grill or smoker for your needs and interest. For more information please go to www.stlouishomefires.com.



Although Frank carries several lines of quality equipment, such as Weber, The Green Egg, Broilmaster, Hasty-bake, Holland, and Treager grills, there are two that piques my particular interest.



The Good-One Smoker/Grill is an all year performer. It's unique design controls heat in the smoking compartment for uniform cooking temperatures and eliminates the need to rotisserie or electric. It performs exceptionally well in all types of weather conditions and requires less tending than other grill/smokers on the market.



The Good-One is endorsed and used by Chris Marks, eight-time Grand Champion of The American Royal Barbecue in Kansas City– the largest such contest in the world. Only one other person has won more than once, and that person has won only twice. For more information please go to www.thegood-one.com.



Rebel grills are the exclusive product of St. Louis Home Fires.

Rebel grills and smokers are locally made and hand crafted for the highest quality championship performance.

If you are in the market for a new grill to make great BBQ no matter the weather, do yourself a favor and visit St. Louis Home Fires to see the latest in smokers, grills and accessories including an extensive inventory of smoking woods, BBQ rubs and spices.