

Immense Sadness and Great Barbecue, *all in one afternoon*

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I have never eaten C&K Barbecue but have certainly heard and read about this north side institution over the years; I finally did so just the other day only after a sobering realization that all good things come to an end, or at least I was reminded, that everything is temporary.

I made my annual pilgrimage to North St. Louis as I have done every fall since 1979. No, it was not to enjoy one of the very best, and few remaining, traditional St. Louis style BBQ joints in St. Louis. It was for another nostalgic reason all together.

Only a few streets over from where I grew up in Bel-Nor was acres of open fields known to us kids as Marillac Fields. Always insight was the massive convent of the Daughters of Charity Order which sat high on a hill appearing like a Medieval Fortress. This whole area, which is now mostly part of UMSL's Campus, consisted of hundreds of acres of rolling meadow and cornfields. My friends and I use to play in those fields growing up during the 1960's.

Later, when I was in high school and college, I use to run these fields and hills in early autumn to get in shape for the upcoming basketball season. This was a great place to run – challenging and beautiful.

One of the highlights during these fall conditioning runs was the site of pear trees growing on the edge of Incarnate Word Academy on the southwestern part of Marillac.

There were approximately seven pear trees lined up along a

wooden split rail fence that bordered the all girl's high school and Marillac.



These pears were just coming ripe in the fall and they were absolutely delicious. I use to rest at that spot and eat my fill of those juicy pears. Fortunately, the Nuns never ran me off. Although the area near the pear trees is now an athletic field for the girl's high school there are still four of these original trees still standing. Every October I still visit the school to pick and eat a few of these plump and juicy pears from these ancient trees.

This past Tuesday I made my 39th consecutive visit to pick and enjoy a few of those pears. When I pulled up onto the parking lot between the nun's grave site and the athletic field, to my shock and sadness the remaining trees were gone.

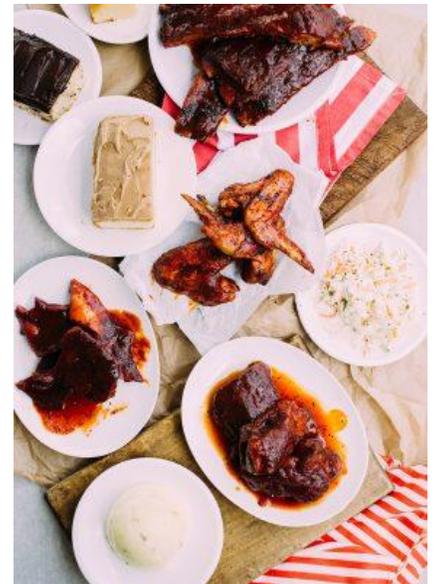
I sat in my car, dazed, staring at an open lawn, and heart broken. We all have a life span, and, these few remaining special trees met theirs



- a fun tradition abruptly coming to an end.

Now that I'm an official member of the mature senior citizen club, I gathered by composure, and realized that I needed something to cheer me up.

C&K Barbecue came to mind. Since there are so few remaining, I am always on the lookout for traditional St. Louis style barbecue and heard C&K is one of the best.



C&K does not serve barbecue dry unless you're crazy enough to ask. They serve "traditional" St. Louis style BBQ. They serve their BBQ with warm barbecue sauce slathered over the meat over slices white bread soaking in their

incredible, award winning BBQ sauce.

The trend toward “dry” barbecue with regional sauces on the side dominates the St. Louis BBQ scene today. Not so at C&K. We’re talking tradition, heritage, and old school flavor.

I was not at all disappointed. I ordered just a small sample, two spare rib bones and a quarter chicken; just enough for dinner. The ribs and chicken were extremely tender and flavorful, and the BBQ sauce is some of the best I’ve had, anywhere.

C&K is carry out only and offers a full menu of St. Louis old-school

favorites such as pork spare ribs (with knuckle left on), chicken, rib tips, pork steak, beef ribs and brisket. They also offer BBQ snouts and tripe.

C&K Barbecue is a family operation that has been in business since 1963. Daryl Brantley, owner and pit master safeguards this incredible regional institution. The history of barbecue in St. Louis would be hard to write without families like the Brantley’s keeping tradition alive.

Chicken soup may be the cure for a winter cold, but, St. Louis old-style barbecue is just the

prescription when you lose a special tradition.



Check them out online:
candkbbq.com



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