

Try one of these recipes for lip-smackin' ribs

Hickory-smoked ribs, hot 'n' spicy ribs, plain red-sauced ribs, onion-flavored red-sauced ribs, sweet-sauced ribs — no matter what your preference, "barbecued" ribs provide some of the best tasting, lip-smacking, finger-licking American food.

What exactly are "barbecued" ribs? Barbecue, according to the U.S.D.A., is a cooking method. They state that barbecue "shall be cooked by the direct action of dry heat resulting from the burning of hard wood or the coals therefrom . . ."

Whether you eat them indoors at your favorite restaurant or outdoors in your backyard, ribs can be enjoyed all year. "Barbecued" ribs are a basic American food — simple and fun to eat.

But there are as many variations as there are chefs and home cooks. Each cook has their unique way to prepare the ribs and their own "secret" ingredients in their sauce. But there is nothing secret about the most essential ingredient — ribs themselves.

Wholesome, high-quality pork is the most popular meat for tender, tangy tantalizing barbecued ribs. The two most popular pork rib cuts are pork back ribs and spareribs. The pork back ribs are cut from the blade and center section of the pork loin. They contain rib bones and meat between the ribs called finger meat. A whole back rib slab is about four inches wide.

MANY RESTAURANTS serve whole-slabs and half-slabs of ribs. They make a half-slab by cutting the whole slab lengthwise, through the rib bones. The result is two half-slabs, each about two inches wide.

A growing number of restaurants offer customers a portion of the back ribs which is not commonly available at your local meat market — baby back ribs. To locate the baby back ribs, start at the shoulder of the whole slab of back ribs. Ribs are through four are wide; ribs five through 12 are the thin baby ribs.

Two restaurants that serve these "Cadillac of ribs" are Carson's, Chicago, and the 1984 National Rib Cook-Off winner — Calhoun's, Knoxville, Tenn.

Some restaurants also serve spareribs, which are not as meaty but just as tasty, as the baby back ribs. They come from the pork belly or side. A slab of spareribs is about six inches wide and contains long rib cartilage and portions of the breast bone and diaphragm. Some retailers and restaurants, such as Leon's in Chicago, trim the breast bone off the spareribs. They are commonly sold or labeled as "St. Louis-style" in the supermarket.

• RIB SALES across the country are booming. Carson's sells 35,000 pounds of baby back ribs every week in its five restaurants. Calhoun's increased its rib sales by 30 to 40 percent after it won the National Rib Cook-Off last August. They sell 11,000 pounds of baby back ribs each week in their single outlet. And Leon's sells 18,000 pounds of the spareribs (St. Louis-style) in four Chicago outlets every week.

Once you've selected your favorite cut of pork ribs, it's time to get started cooking. Restaurants may choose from six different cooking methods for their ribs, but none is any better than another. There's the conventional oven method, the moist/dry method, smoking, pressure barbecue, re-cooking of precooked ribs and broiling.

The methods that use moist heat provide cooked ribs with meat that "falls off the bones." Ribs cooked by dry-heat methods stick to the bone more readily and make a chewier rib. It's important not to overcook ribs, but they all should be cooked to an internal temperature of 170 degrees F.

THE VARIETY of sauces for ribs is even greater than the number of different cooking methods used to prepare them. Every region in the U.S. has their own taste preference. For example, in the Southwest they prefer a hickory-smoke flavored sauce. Then in the South they like their ribs hot 'n' spicy. The Midwest, however, leans toward the more traditional catsup-based sauce, sometimes flavored with onions. In the North and Northeast, their conservative tastes are for a milder, sweet, but not tangy sauce.

It's difficult to pin down a chef as to the ingredients in his or her sauce. Calhoun's, for example, claims to have 21 to 22 different ingredients in their not-too-hot, not-too-thick, not-too-sweet sauce.

Whatever basic ingredients are used, the sauce is not basted on the ribs until they are about one-third through the cooking cycle. And for those rib connoisseurs who prefer a heavy dose of sauce, an extra bowl of this tasty condiment is always served at the table.

To prepare award-winning ribs under your own broiler, or in your backyard, try the following recipes for All-American Pork Ribs or Smokey Molasses-Flavored Spareribs. To get the popular heavy smoke flavor for your ribs, the All-American Pork Ribs can be cooked in a water smoker. The Smokey Molasses-Flavored Spareribs get their flavor with the addition of liquid hickory seasoning to the sauce.

And to make your barbecuing even easier, the ribs can be pre-cooked in the microwave oven, and

then basted with the sauce and finished under the broiler or on the grill.

However ribs are prepared, get your taste buds ready to sample the modern day version of the original frontier food.

ALL-AMERICAN PORK RIBS
Preparation time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 45 minutes to 1 hour
3 pounds pork loin back ribs
1/2 tsp salt
1 small onion, coarsely chopped
2 tsp water
1/2 cup catsup
1/2 cup chili sauce
2 tsp lemon juice
1/2 tsp dry mustard
1/2 tsp ground red pepper
1/4 tsp paprika
1/4 tsp Worcestershire sauce

Sprinkle salt over back ribs; rub over surface of pork. Place ribs on rack in broiler pan (or on grill top) so surface of meat is 5 or more inches from heat. Broil at low to moderate temperature 45 minutes to 1 hour or until done, turning occasionally. Meanwhile cook onion in water in medium saucepan 3 to 4 minutes. Add catsup, chili sauce, lemon juice, mustard, cayenne, paprika and Worcestershire sauce and cook slowly 15 minutes. Brush both sides of ribs with sauce during last 10 minutes of cooking. Serve remaining sauce with ribs. 4 servings.

(Note: Pork back ribs may be prepared in water smoker. Prepare smoker according to manufacturer's direction. Place ribs directly in center of cooking rack. Cover smoker and smoke-cook at low temperature 4 1/2 to 5 hours. Brush both sides of ribs with sauce during last 20 minutes of cooking. Recipe may be doubled.)

SMOKEY MOLASSES-FLAVORED SPARERIBS
Preparation time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 1 hour

3 pounds pork spareribs (breast bone off), cut into 3 to 4 rib portions
1/2 tsp salt
Water
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
2 tsp butter
1 cup catsup
2 tsp light molasses
2 tsp lemon juice
1/2 tsp hot pepper sauce
1/4 tsp ground cumin
1/4 tsp liquid hickory seasoning

Honda Crutch is self appointed mayor and overseer of Luthensbach, Tex. He lures people to the town he bought through a Want Ad by staging events such as Luthensbach's Home Movies Film Festival and Hell Hath No Fury Women's World Chili Cook-Off.



Place spareribs and salt in Dutch oven; add water to cover. Bring to a boil; reduce heat, cover tightly and simmer 30 minutes. Remove ribs from water; place on rack in broiler pan (or on grill top) so surface of meat is 5 or more inches from heat. Broil at low to moderate temperature 30 to 35 minutes or until done, turning occasionally. Meanwhile cook onion and garlic in butter in medium saucepan 3 to 4 minutes. Add catsup, onion and cook slowly 15 minutes. Brush both sides of ribs with sauce during last 10 minutes of cooking. Serve remaining sauce with ribs. 4 servings.
(Note: Recipe may be doubled.)

The variety of sauces for ribs is even greater than the number of different cooking methods used to prepare them. Every region in the U.S. has its own taste preference.

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BOLOGNA
1 LB. PKG. **\$1.59**

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Lo-cal pasta
SPAGHETTI VIA VENITO
1. In large bowl, season ground beef with salt and pepper to taste; shape into 18 small meatballs (1 inch).
2. In 2-quart saucepan over medium heat, brown meatballs; spoon off fat.
3. Add V-8 vegetable juice, eggplant, green pepper, garlic and Italian seasoning; heat to boiling.
4. Reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer 18 minutes or until meatballs are done, stirring occasionally.
5. Meanwhile, in cup combine water and cornstarch until blended. Gradually stir cornstarch mixture into sauce. Cook, stirring until thickened. Serve over hot spaghetti. Makes 1/4 cups of 4 servings.
253 calories per serving.
Variation: Substitute 4 cups cooked spaghetti squash for spaghetti. 253 calories per serving.

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