

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Growing Up In Bandera

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The Bandera Prophet

Some of my favorite childhood memories involve bar-b-que events. Whether we are talking family, church or community events the visions from the past are special. Around the Clark house we have various pits and smokers we use for preparing meat of all kinds when it's a family gathering day celebration or just me and my wife.

Remembering the early St. Stanislaus Festival Days bbq events that I witnessed as a kid I don't recall the oldtimers who manned the pits using anything other than oak firewood. Several times I helped my uncle Phil Kindla in the pasture gathering wood in his old Chevy truck for the Catholic Church bbq using only an axe. Back in the day I never saw a chainsaw being used. My uncle Phil had one bad eye he acquired while chopping firewood with an axe. One thing that was always in good supply around that pit down on the river near the Silver Spur bridge was cold Pearl beer. I wasn't anywhere near the drinking age and if I had been I would have brought Lone Star anyway.

In our big steel pit here at home these days we might use oak, pecan, mesquite or even wild cherry when we can get it. My preferred wood is pecan because it gives off a milder flavored smoke. It's an old age and indigestion thing. I find that a mesquite and oak mix is a good brisket grilling combination. I don't know what Chicken Charlie uses but he makes some mighty fine beef brisket sandwiches.

I like pecan pellets in my electric smoker for doing chicken or pork roasts. When grilling steaks, burgers or fajitas in our little kettle pit in the front yard there are plenty of pecan twigs laying around under the big pecan trees to throw in on the hot coals. I'm not usually a beer

drinker but firing up a pit has been known to make me uncap a Dos Equis or two on a warm day.

Some self described purist will insist that using charcoal or an electric smoker is considered cheating. When it comes to cooking on a pit I am a realist, not an artist. I have better things to do than hovering over a hot pit all afternoon in anticipation of creating a masterpiece that I will soon be consuming. Better things to do as in taking a nap.

One battle that has raged throughout my Growing Up In Bandera years is the question of where the best bbq can be found. I can tell you that I wrote Dallas off the list years ago and recently Hondo too. I sure wish Chicken Charlie would get back into town so I don't have to work so hard here at home in search of fine dining when I get a hankerin' for some bbq.