



BBQ BASICS

THE BASICS OF BBQ AND HOW TO SEASON IT

INTRODUCTION

- Traditionally, Memorial Day begins the season of cooking outdoors, referred to as BBQing, grilling, and/or cooking/grilling out; however, some hardcore amateur chefs will cook outdoors all year long.
- Each year, Americans will spend billions of dollars on grilling/BBQing equipment and meat.
- Some Americans will ask, is there a difference between grilling and BBQing, what type of grill or smoker do I need, and/or how do I cook this piece of meat?



GRILLING VS. BBQ

Grilling:

- The terms grilling and BBQ are thought to be the same; however, they are very different cooking methods.
- The differences are time, temperature, and cuts of meat used.
- Grilling involves shorter cooking times, hotter temperatures over direct heat, and is more suitable for more tender cuts.
- The more tender cuts of meat have the words rib or loin in their name, such as beef ribeye, top loin, and sirloin steak, or pork loin chops.
- These cuts tend to have smaller muscle fibers and a less dense connective tissue matrix that makes them better suited for shorter, higher temperature, direct heat cooking, thus **grilling**.



GRILLING VS. BBQ

BBQ:

- Less tender cuts have larger muscle fibers and a denser connective tissue matrix, but can be made tender by longer cooking times, lower temperature, indirect heat, thus **BBQing**.
- These cuts of meat have the words leg, shoulder, round, or chuck in the name.
- However, beef brisket, pork spareribs, and baby back ribs also fall into this category.



A GENERAL HISTORY OF BBQ

- Origins: Derived from a Caribbean cooking method barbacoa (slow-smoking meat over a wooden frame).
- Spread: Introduced to North America via Spanish colonization; adopted and adapted by settlers and enslaved Africans.
- 18th–19th Century U.S.: BBQ became a staple of social events, especially in the American South (churches, political rallies, community gatherings).
- Regional styles emerged:
 - Carolinas: Vinegar- or mustard-based pork BBQ.
 - Texas: Beef brisket with tomato-based or dry rubs.
 - Memphis: Pork ribs with dry rub or sweet tomato sauce.
 - Kansas City: Thick, sweet tomato-based sauce on various meats.

KENTUCKY BBQ HISTORY

- Distinct Feature: Known for mutton BBQ (especially in Western KY).
- Black Dip Sauce: Tangy vinegar-Worcestershire-based sauce traditionally served with mutton.
- Origins: Began in the early 1800s; linked to sheep farming in Daviess County.
- Cultural Role: Gained popularity through Catholic church picnics (notably St. Mary's of the Woods).
- Regional Variations:
 - Western KY: Mutton and pork, often smoked over hickory.
 - Eastern KY: More pork and chicken, usually with simple vinegar-based seasonings.
 - Modern Influence: Owensboro is often considered the BBQ capital of KY.

TYPES OF BBQ

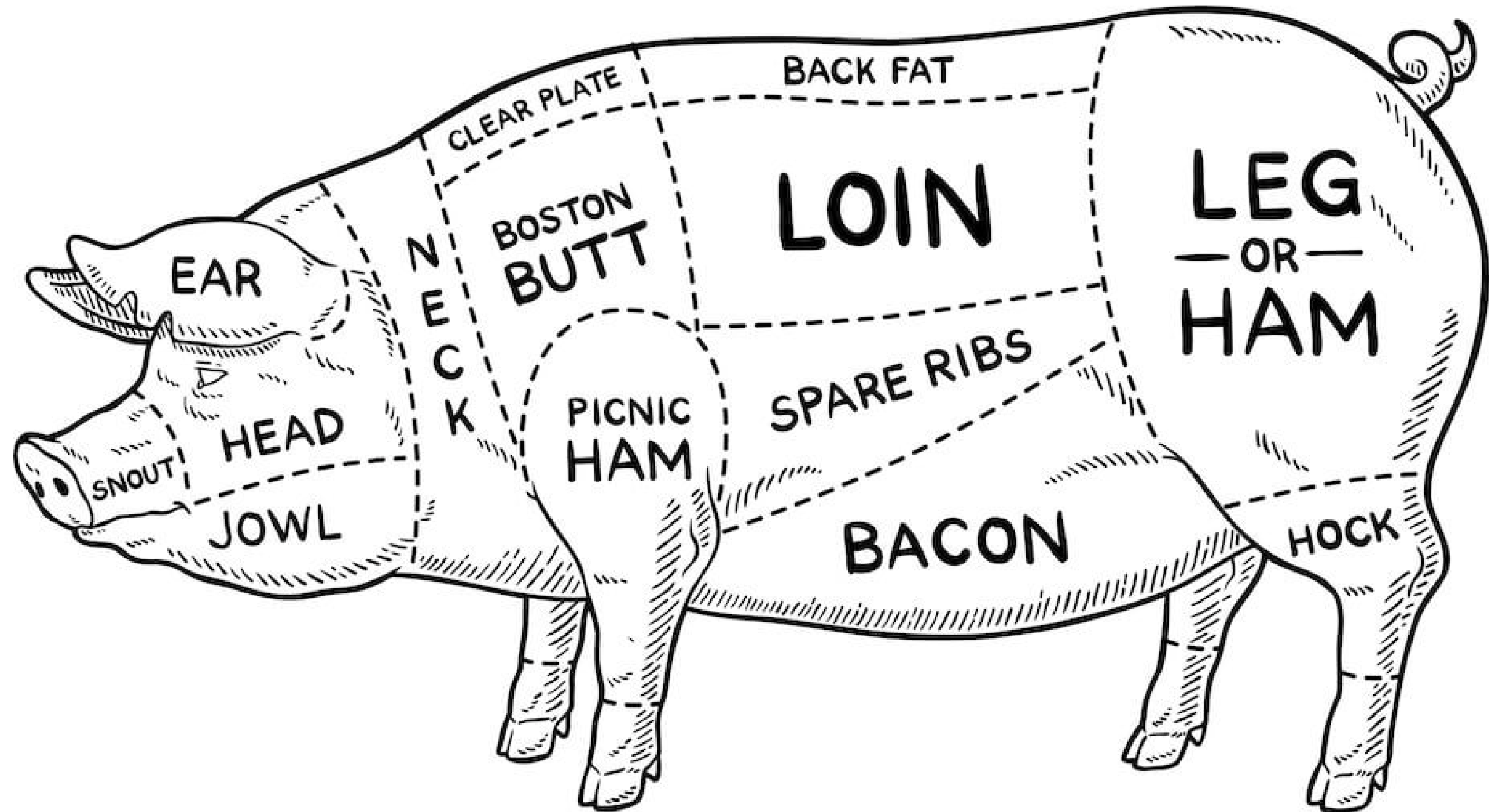
Region	Main Meats	Sauce Type	Cooking Style / Notes
Eastern NC	Whole hog, pulled pork	Vinegar + pepper	No tomato; sharp, tangy flavor
Western NC	Pork shoulder	Vinegar + tomato	Milder than Eastern style
Central Carolina	Pulled pork	Mustard-based ("Carolina Gold")	Unique to SC; tangy and bold
Central Texas	Beef brisket, ribs, sausage	Minimal or tomato-based (served on	Simple rubs (salt & pepper), smoked or side
East Texas	Chopped beef	Thick, sweet tomato-based	Cooked to fall-apart texture
West Texas	Various meats	Minimal or dry or sicy vinegar	Cooked over direct heat ("cowboy-style")
South Texas	Barbacoa (beef cheek)	Tomato-based, sweet & tangy	Strong use of dry rubs; smoked over hickory
Memphis	Pork nibls wet or dry), pulled pork	Thick, sweet tomato + molasses	Wide variety of meats; heavy sauce use
Western Kentucky	Mutton, pork, chicken	Vinegar-based "black dip" with	Signature mutton BBQ; centered around Owensboro

PORK VS. BEEF

Pork BBQ

- Most Common Cuts: Pulled pork (shoulder/butt), ribs (spare or baby back), whole hog.
- Popular In: Carolinas, Memphis, Kansas City, Western Kentucky.
- Flavor Profile:
 - Mild, takes on rubs and sauces well.
 - Often sweeter, with vinegar or mustard sauces.
- Cooking Method:
 - Typically smoked low and slow over wood (hickory or oak).
 - Commonly uses dry rubs and wet sauces.
- Texture: Tender, often fall-apart when pulled.
- Common Sauces: Vinegar-based, mustard-based (Carolina Gold), tomato + molasses.

CUTS OF PORK

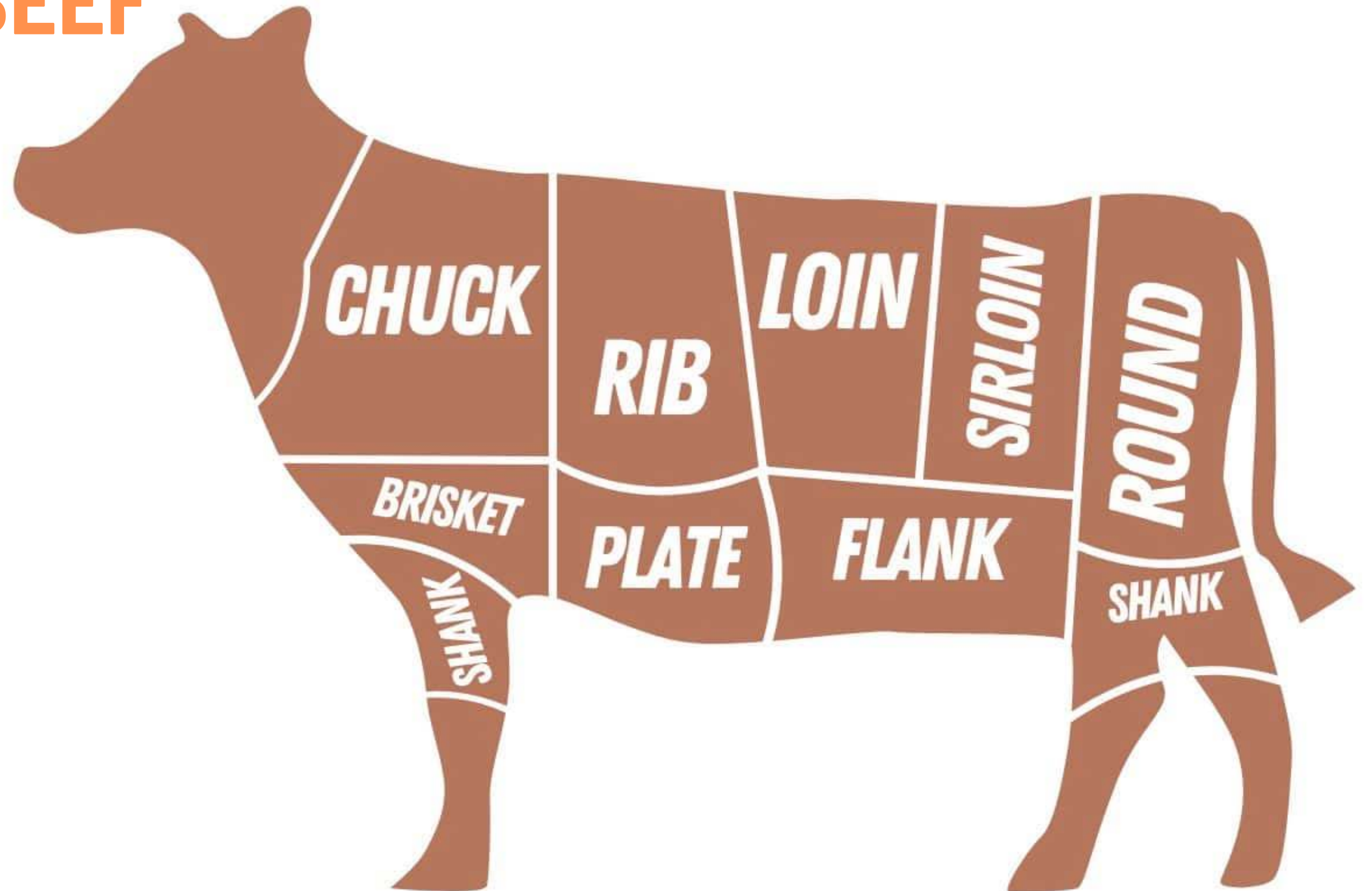


PORK VS. BEEF

Beef BBQ

- Most Common Cuts: Brisket, ribs, beef sausage, burnt ends.
- Popular In: Texas (especially Central and East), Kansas City.
- Flavor Profile:
 - Richer, beefier taste; more robust and savory.
 - Often uses simple salt & pepper rubs.
- Cooking Method:
 - Smoked low and slow, especially brisket.
 - Less saucy—focus is often on bark and smoke flavor.
- Texture: Brisket should be juicy with a bark; ribs are meaty and hearty.
- Common Sauces: Light tomato-based (on side), or minimal sauce use.

CUTS OF BEEF



MARINADES VS. DRY RUB VS. SAUCE

Type	When Used	Purpose	Typical Ingredients	Best On
Marinade	Before cooking	Tenderize, infuse flavor	Acid, oil, spices	Chicken, pork, steak
Dry Rub	Before/during	Build flavor crust (bark)	Salt, sugar, spices	Ribs, brisket, pulled pork
Sauce	During/after	Add moisture, final flavor	Tomato, vinegar, mustard, sweeteners	Ribs, chicken, pulled pork

MAKING BBQ DRY RUB

The purpose of a dry rub is to create a flavorful bark on the barbecued meat. Dry rubs are applied before cooking and typically consist of common kitchen spices.

- There are four (4) flavor components to a dry rub:
 - Spicy
 - Sweet
 - Savory
 - Salty.
 - Balance is the key.

Always consider the meat when making a dry rub:

- pork compliments sweet and smoky flavors
- beef pairs well with robust flavors
- chicken works well with a variety of flavors
- shrimp benefits from a bit of spice.

Feel free to experiment with spices to taste, or use one of the following recipes.

MAKING BBQ DRY RUB

Pork

1 tbsp. smoked paprika
1 tbsp. onion powder
1 tbsp. garlic powder
1 tbsp. kosher salt
1 tbsp. brown sugar
½ tbsp. crushed red pepper
½ tbsp. ginger powder

Beef

1 tbsp. kosher salt
½ tbsp. black pepper
1 tbsp. garlic powder
1 tbsp. smoked paprika
1 tbsp. light brown sugar
½ tbsp. ground cumin

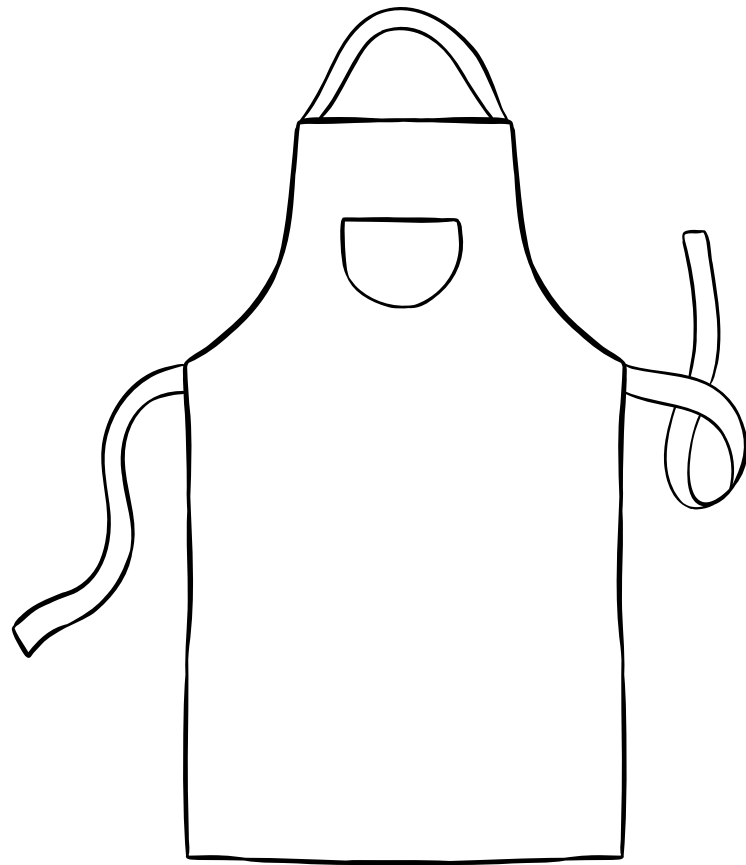
Chicken

1 tbsp. kosher salt
1 tbsp. onion powder
1 tbsp. garlic powder
1 tbsp. ground dill
½ tbsp. ground cumin
1 tbsp. black pepper

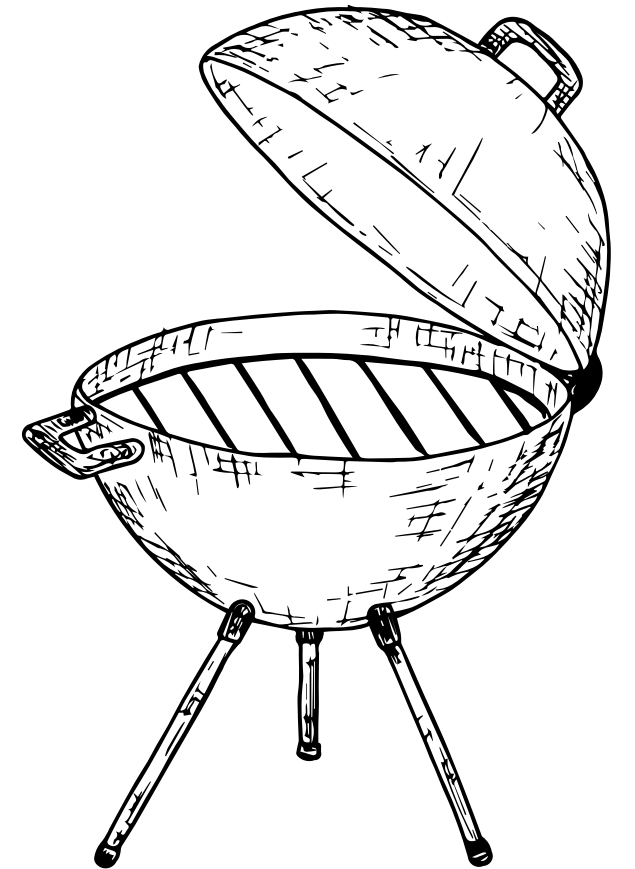
Shrimp

1 tbsp. garlic powder
1 tbsp. smoked paprika
½ tbsp. parsley
1 tbsp. grated Parmesan

Recipe Credits: Brian Estevez, 4-H agent, UF/IFAS Extension Escambia County; and Jereme Johnson, 4-H program assistant, UF/IFAS Extension Escambia County.



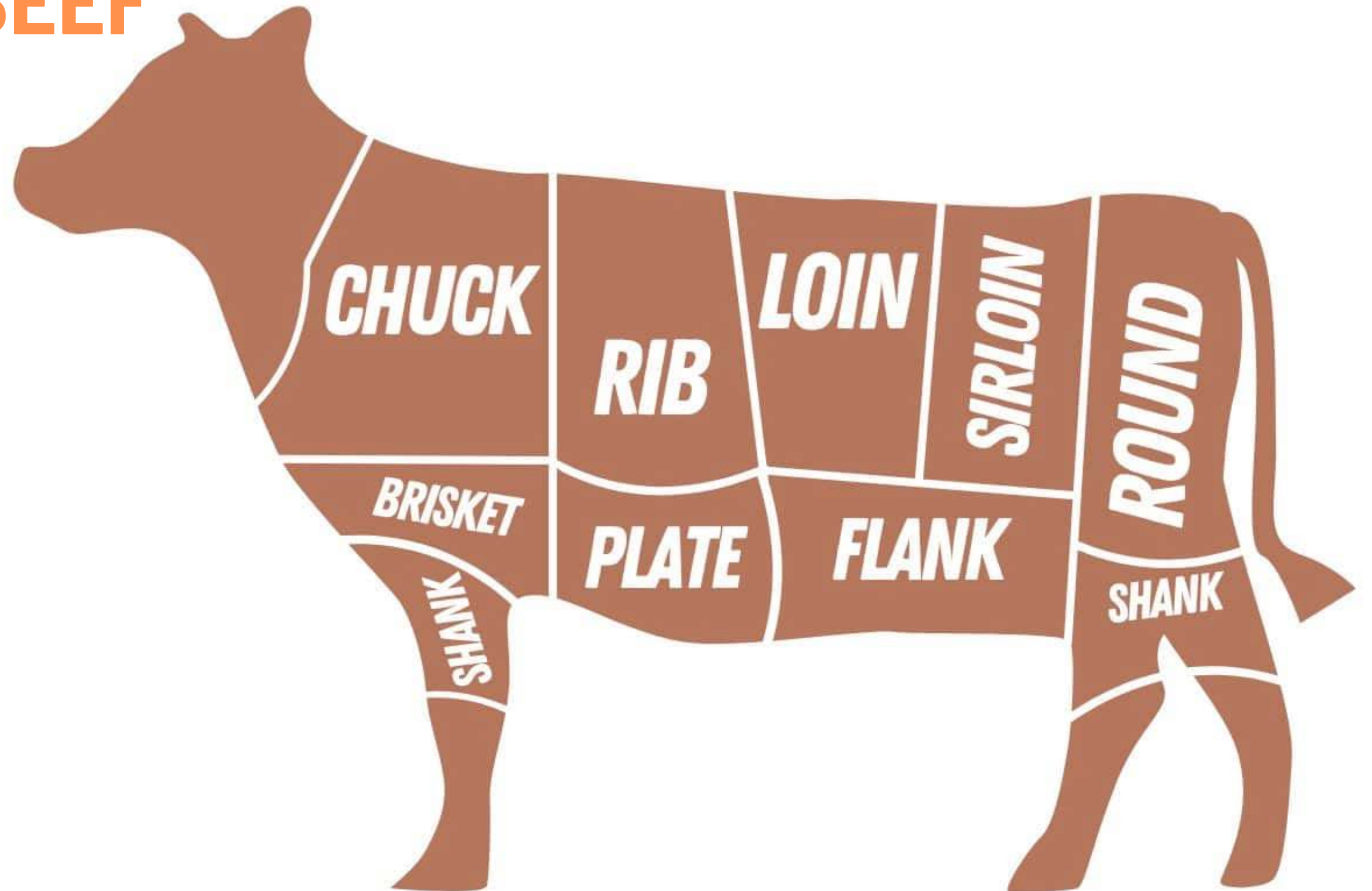
BBQ PART 2: TOOLS OF THE TRADE



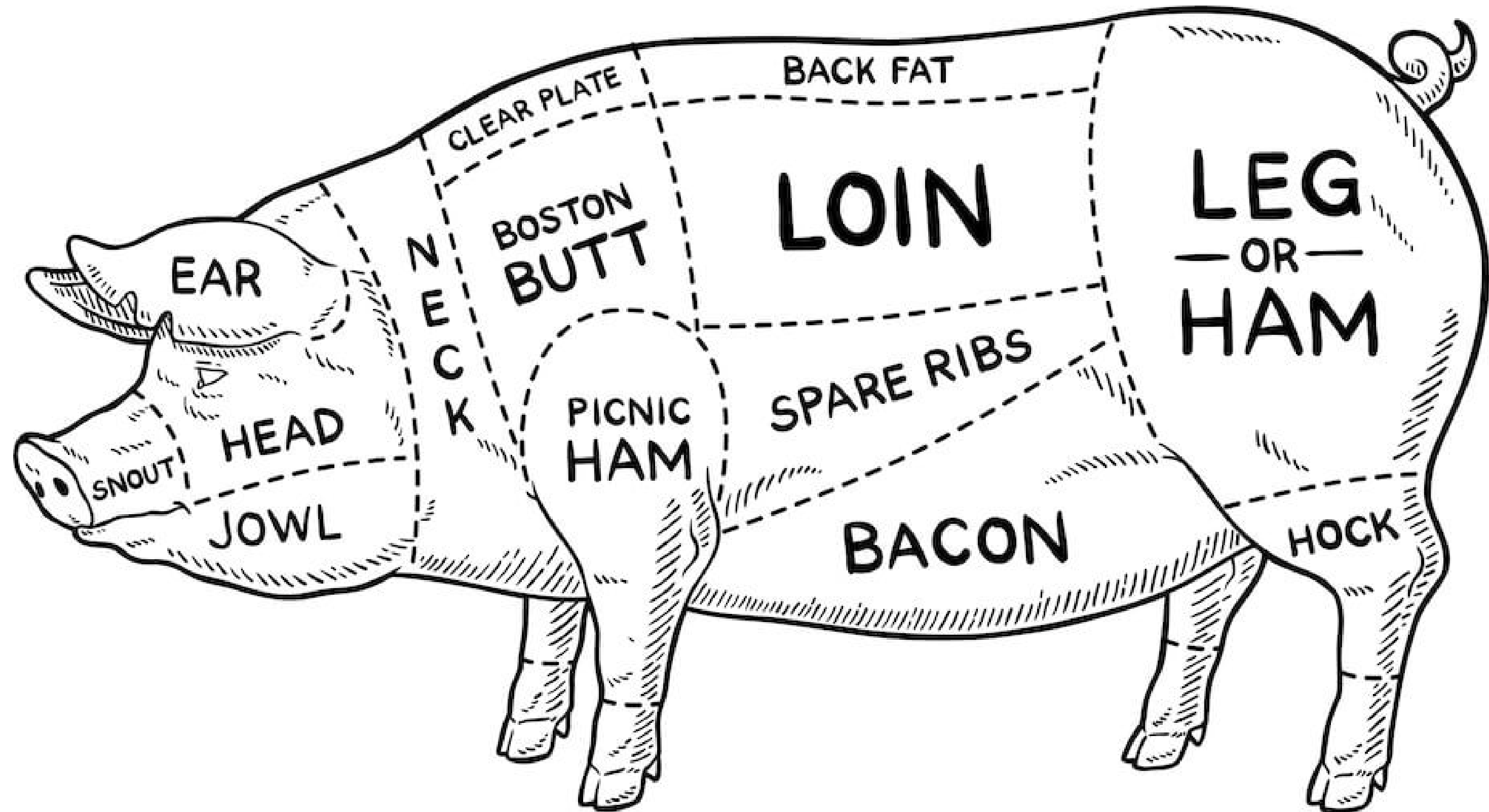
TOOLS OF THE TRADE

- Smokers/Grills:
 - Propane grills
 - Kettle grills
 - Offset grills/smokers
 - Pellet smokers
 - Kamada style grills/smokers
 - Competition smokers (AKA stick burners).
- ***Unless you plan on going pro with meat smoking, we'll just cover the most common for home use.***
- Meat - pork shoulder, pork ribs, pork loin, whole hog, beef brisket, beef ribs, tri-tip, etc.
- Smoking woods and charcoal types
 - Hardwood vs. soft, chunks vs. chips
- Wrapping - butcher paper, aluminum foil.
- Food Safety - internal temperature.

CUTS OF BEEF



CUTS OF PORK



GRILLS AND SMOKERS

Propane Grills

- Easy to use, beginner-friendly.
- Great for grilling; can be used for BBQ with temp control.



Kettle Grills

- Charcoal-based, versatile.
- Can grill or BBQ with airflow and charcoal setup.



Offset Smokers

- Separate firebox for indirect heat/smoke.
- Great for traditional BBQ and grilling.



Pellet Smokers

- Uses wood pellets with digital controls.
- Easy to use; good for smoking and some grilling.



HARDWOODS VS. SOFT, CHUNKS VS. CHIPS

Type	Use for Smoking?	Best Use	Notes	Flavor Pairings by Meat
Hardwoods	✔ Yes	All meats	Clean-burning, long-lasting smoke	- Oak: Beef, pork, lamb - Hickory: Ribs, pork shoulder, brisket - Maple: Chicken, pork, turkey - Mesquite: Brisket, game meats (use sparingly) - Apple/Cherry (fruitwoods): Chicken, pork, fish, turkey
Softwoods	✘ No	Not recommended	Contains resin; bitter & harmful smoke	None – do not use for cooking
Wood Chunks	✔ Yes	Long smokes (brisket, pork butt)	Burns slow & steady	Use with charcoal grills or smokers Great with all meats depending on wood type used
Wood Chips	✔ Yes	Quick smokes, gas grills	Burns fast; may require soaking	Best for chicken, fish, or short cooks using matching flavors (e.g., apple with pork)

CHARCOAL TYPES

Charcoal Type	Best Use	Pros	Cons	Meat Pairings & Notes
Lump Charcoal	Smoking and grilling	- Burns hot and clean - Natural hardwood flavor - Lights quickly	- Burns faster - Less consistent size	- Great for steak, chicken, pork chops, and hot grilling - Good for meats needing strong sear or fast cook
Charcoal Briquettes	Low & slow smoking, general grilling	- Long, steady burn - Consistent heat output	- Contains fillers/binders (unless natural) - Slower to light	- Best for ribs, brisket, pulled pork - Great for long cooks with consistent temp
Natural Briquettes	Smoking or grilling	- All-natural ingredients - Low ash, steady heat	- More expensive than regular briquettes	- Suitable for all meats - Combines consistency of briquettes with cleaner burn of lump charcoal
Flavored/Infused Briquettes	Quick smoke flavor enhancement	- Adds hickory, mesquite, or apple flavors	- Flavor may be subtle or artificial	- Good for chicken, sausages, veggies, or when you want extra smoke without wood chunks

TEMPERATURE

For BBQ smoking, there are two layers of “safe temperatures” to consider:

USDA Minimum Safe Internal Temperatures (Food Safety)

These are the absolute minimum temps to ensure harmful bacteria are destroyed:

- Pork (whole cuts) – 145°F (63°C) + 3-minute rest
- Beef (steaks/roasts) – 145°F (63°C) + 3-minute rest
- Ground pork or beef – 160°F (71°C) (no rest needed)
- Poultry – 165°F (74°C)

BBQ “Done” Temperatures (Tenderness & Texture)

Low-and-slow smoked BBQ often goes well above USDA minimums to break down connective tissue (collagen) into gelatin, giving that “fall-apart” texture:

- Pork butt / shoulder – 195–205°F (90–96°C)
- Beef brisket – 200–205°F (93–96°C)
- Pork ribs – 190–203°F (88–95°C) for tender bite-off-the-bone texture

SOURCES

Information on history, BBQ (meats, sauces, rubs) & tools of the trade courtesy of Dr. Jeff Lehmkuhler & Dr. Gregg Rentfrow, Ph.D, Extension Professor - Meat Science, University of Kentucky.

Temperature information: USDA Food Safety & Inspection Service

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/meat-catfish/roasting-those-other-holiday-meats>

Dry Rub Recipes:

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/4H451>