

Barbeque Festivals Lip Smackin' Good and Fun

By Jon Lundin

The Lake Placid Olympic speedskating oval and the village of Lake Placid will be filled with the savory aroma of wood smoke and barbeque when barbeque teams from around the country come to Lake Placid, N.Y. to compete in the inaugural Lake Placid, NY—I Love Barbeque Festival (ILBBQF), July 3 and 4. Gates open each day at 10 a.m. and admission is \$5.00 and children under 12 free.

The art of the barbeque is believed to have originated in the Caribbean where Indians used gratings of wood over a slow fire to cook their meat. It's thought that the American barbeque began in the late-1880's, during Western cattle drives, when cowboys began cooking tough and stringy meat like brisket, beef ribs, venison and even goat, for five to seven hours to tenderize it.

Barbequing has come a long way since its early days and is now thought to be summer's right of passage. Three out of every four American homes own a grill, either gas or charcoal.

"I think that people are getting back to their roots, and this seems to be an extension of that," said Richard Decker (Essex Junction, Vt.). Decker's team, Lost Nation Smoke Company, will be competing in the two-day Lake Placid festival. "I think that people are spending more time outside whether it's at the beach, spending time with the family or doing some gardening, barbequing and cooking outside seems to be a natural extension of that."

There's a difference between grilling and barbequing. Most people actually grill; which involves placing food directly over the heat, while barbequing involves slow-cooking meat at low temperature for a longer period of time, over wood or charcoal.

"When you're grilling, you're actually dealing with a better, leaner type of meat that can handle the higher temperatures and direct heat. Of course chicken, fish and burgers are the most popular items that people grill," noted Decker. "When you're barbequing, you're dealing with a lower-end type of meat that needs to be cooked slower and at lower heat to make it taste good. By far, the most popular type of meat for this is ribs, but brisket and pork are also very popular."

The growth and popularity has extended far beyond the backyard. Today, barbeque web sites receive thousands of hits each day and barbeque contests, tournaments and festivals are popping up across the country. The Kansas City Barbeque Society, alone, is sponsoring 170 tournaments nationwide this year.

"Don't think for a moment that barbeque festivals have reached their peak, there's still plenty of room for more," remarked Decker. "These events are ideal

family events, not only for those who attend the festival, but also for the teams... in fact my team is made up of my family. Husbands, wives and the whole family can come together and truly have a great time and most of these events feature music, games and rides for the kids. These events are really built for the family.”

Charitable and community organizations have taken notice of the popularity of barbeque festivals and have begun using them as a primary resource to raise money. Proceeds from the ILBBQF will benefit the Shipman Youth Center of Lake Placid.

“The youth center created an advisory council to find a signature event that would raise money for the organization,” mentioned Dmitry Feld, of the ILBBQF. “We realized that there were a number of golf tournaments in the area and felt that there was no room for another one, so we began looking at something new and unique and that’s when the barbeque festival began to take shape.”

Twenty-five teams from across the country will be coming to Lake Placid to compete for \$7,500.00 in prize money in four different categories of beef brisket, chicken, pulled pork and pork ribs, but Feld doesn’t believe that teams are coming to the Olympic region just for the money. “Obviously, the area has something to do with bringing in the teams,” stated Feld. “The Kansas City Barbeque Society was immediately excited about having an event here, and word has just spread throughout the barbeque community about this event. A number of teams will be coming here to compete, but I’m sure that many will stay to vacation with their families.”

In addition to the prize money, the squads will also be competing for the title of festival grand champion, and who will be eligible to participate in the American Royal and Kansas City Barbeque national championship, held every year in Kansas City, Mo. This team could also qualify for the Jack Daniels World Barbeque Championships.

The ILBBQF will also feature food, music, children activities for the public and barbeque enthusiasts can also participate in food demonstrations with Food Network’s show host Jack McDavid, who co-hosts “*Grillin’ & Chillin’*” with Bobby Flay. Celebrities, including John Frank, a two-time NFL Super Bowl champion with the San Francisco 49ers, as well as a number of Olympic medalists will also be on hand to sign autographs and pose for pictures. “There’s going to be something for everyone,” said Feld. “There’s going to be great food, but the focus is on creating a fun family event that everyone can enjoy and want back for years to come.”

On Monday, July 3, gates will be open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., while on Tuesday, July 4, gates will be open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. For more information on the Lake Placid, NY—I Love Barbeque Festival, visit their web site, www.ILBBQF.com.