

Smokin'!

ENJOY SUMMERTIME BBQ IN ALEXANDRIA

BY RACHEL KISER



Barbecue is not an experience meant to be enjoyed solo, unless you picked up some take out and you're devouring it in your car because you just couldn't wait.

All it needs is what the earth can provide — fire, smoke, heat and water. With its primal roots, it's a messy summer dining pleasure meant to be shared on a picnic table or a backyard get-together — a world away from fancy tablecloths and your Mama's best china.

At times like these, we are desperate for things that remind us all that we are a community, and food is a love language that can convey that. Regardless of where you eat or who you eat it with, barbecue is a summertime comfort food that reminds us all of the simple pleasures of the season.

Here's a look at some of our hometown favorites.





RAISED BY WOLVES

PRIG
BREWING

MYRON MIXON'S PITMASTER BARBECUE



220 N. LEE ST.

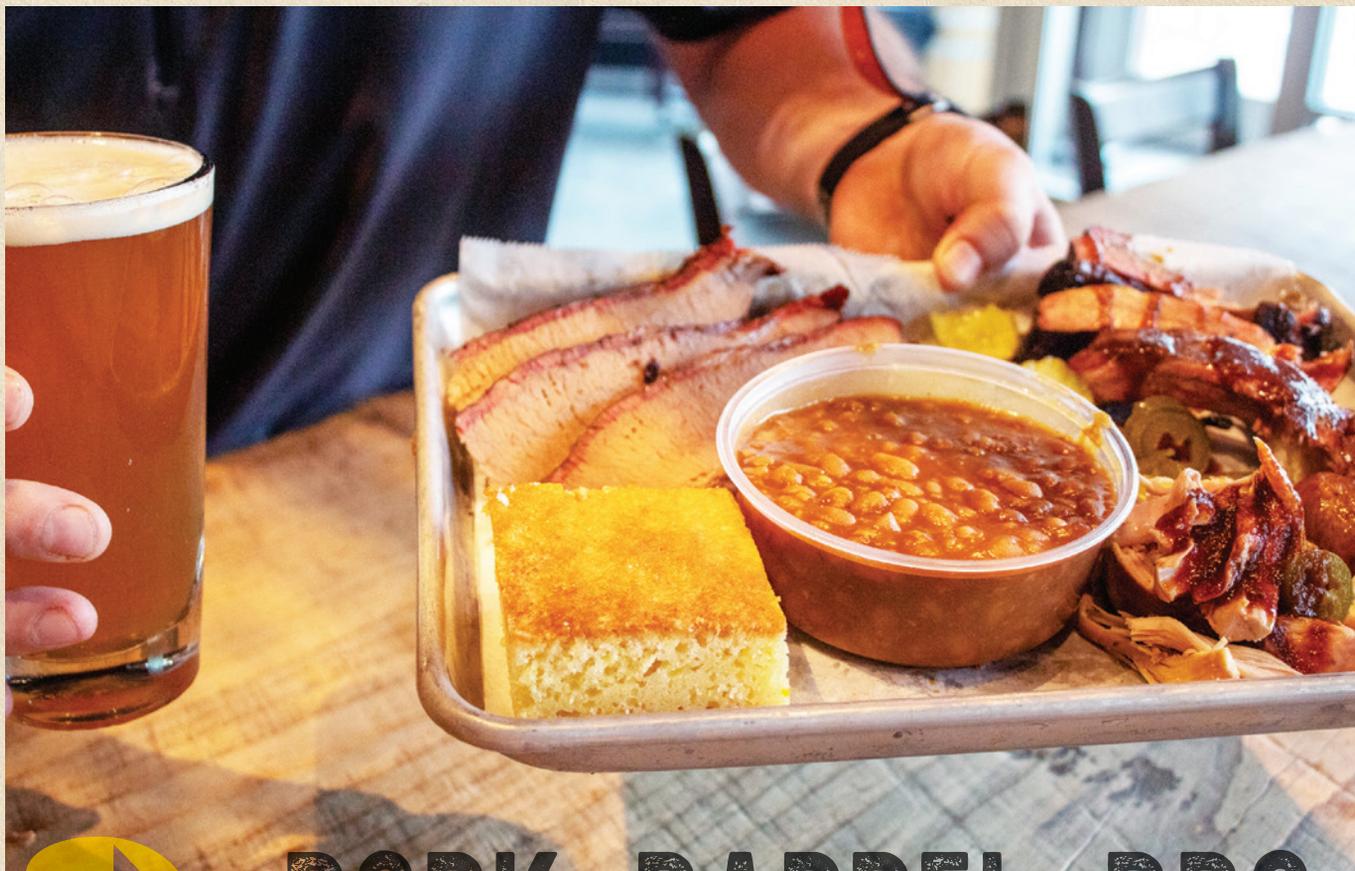
Four-time world barbecue champion Myron Mixon, star of “BBQ Pitmasters” and author of five cookbooks, grew up in Unadilla, Georgia, where he also serves as mayor. His restaurant serves traditional Georgia style barbecue from a vault of family recipes — the baked beans are made with Georgia peaches, the coleslaw is his mother’s recipe, and the deviled eggs are “not your mother’s” deviled eggs, stuffed with baby back ribs.

Mixon, with pitmaster Andy Dunn, smokes their competition barbecue with hickory wood and an H2O smoker designed by Mixon himself. (You can buy one to use at home — prices start at \$4,399.) The brisket, one of their most popular meats, is cooked hot and fast for seven hours, and then smoked for four hours to create a pink smoke ring that halos around the brisket’s edge. Their signature chicken wings are coated in dry rub, smoked, fried and coated again in Myron’s original dry rub mix from his Dad’s recipe. Sauces include an Alabama mayo-based white sauce, a classic and sweet hog sauce, a vinegar-based Carolina sauce and “sweet heat” mustard. And if you still have room, don’t skimp on the banana pudding.



Popular Sides

Baby Back Rib Mac 'n Cheese
Deviled Eggs
Baked Beans



PORK BARREL BBQ

2312 MT. VERNON AVE.

The Pork Barrel brand started when Heath Hall and Brett Thompson stepped into the spotlight on the first season of TV's "Shark Tank" to find a Shark (Barbara Corcoran) to help them grow their sauce and rub company. After their sudden rise to fame, Bill Blackburn and Mike Anderson, of Homegrown Restaurant Group, partnered with the duo to open a restaurant in Del Ray. Since opening in 2011, Homegrown Restaurant Group has opened six restaurants, including their sister restaurant, Sweet Fire Donnas, and pride themselves on Pork Barrel's being a casual joint with a focus on community and dedication to their employees.

Pork Barrel has created an "all American style" based on their favorite barbecue across the country with a twist, like their Redneck Burrito. The sauces — original, sweet, Carolina mustard and vinegar, spicy and the seasonal white or chipotle sauce — represent the different regions of barbecue that inspired them along the way. They marry the best of both worlds, representing the East Coast-style with pulled pork and ribs, smoked with wood and gas-assisted for eight to 12 hours; and Midwestern influences with brisket and jalapeño cheddar sausage, courtesy of local business Logan Sausage. However, the fish, served every Friday, and smoked turkey are the "sleepers" in a barbecue world full of pigs and cows.

Popular Sides

Monster Mac 'n Cheese
Cheesy Grits
Collard Greens





SMOKING KOW

Popular Sides
Mac 'n Cheese
Texas Caviar (black bean and roasted corn salad)

3250 DUKE ST.

Smoking Kow owner Dylan Kough loved barbecue growing up. After graduating high school, he traveled to Kansas City to “try all the famous places” and started experimenting with his own rubs. He started his first food truck in 2015 and eventually opened a brick-and-mortar, fast-casual barbecue joint in 2018.

All their meats — ribs, brisket, pulled pork, chicken, turkey, and sausage — are smoked with aged hickory

logs to achieve that caramelized, bacon-like flavor. The brisket and pork, their most popular meats, are smoked for around 18 hours, while their chicken is smoked for six hours. Their sides, all made in house, pack a punch with fresh jalapeños, like their mac and cheese with garlic and jalapeño, baked beans and cheese jalapeño grits. However, their signature is Kansas City burnt ends, proving that beef is sometimes king, even on the East Coast.



ROCKLANDS BARBEQUE AND GRILLING COMPANY



25 S. QUAKER LANE

The first thing John Snedden remembers cooking as a child was applesauce using apples from his grandmother's tree. His family cooked outside during the summer, unlocking the "unique primal experience and community aspect" of barbecue. He started competing in barbecue competitions as a hobby, where he connected with Bryan Watson, the owner of Buggy's, a pizza and sports bar, which led to his first restaurant job. Since then, Snedden has been driven to create a "delicious, authentic bite," and the goal is to create fresh food made every day, in house, and without processed ingredients. Rocklands' variety of meats — baby back ribs, spare ribs, pork shoulder, brisket, beef ribs — are sourced from local farmers like Gonzales Farms.

Their flavors "aren't trying to emulate any specific style or region with sauce," but feature a cross between Carolina and Florida barbecue, a perfect balance of not-too-sweet, not-too-much vinegar, and four types of peppers and onions. Meats are smoked low and slow with a blend of red oak and hickory wood, and finished on the grill to caramelize for a jam-like finish. Their first menu when they opened, painted on plywood, featured sides that continue to be powerhouses today: Collard greens, broccoli and bacon salad and red beans and rice. Even though the popularity of meats vary by store location, guests "never get tired of barbecue when done right."



Popular Sides

- Sweet Pea Salad
- Minted Cucumber Salad
- Traditional Potato Salad
- Southwestern Black Bean Salad

SWEET FIRE DONNA'S



Popular Sides

Mac 'n Cheese
Texas Caviar (black bean and
roasted corn salad)

510 JOHN CARLYLE ST.

Donna Anderson, a retired cardiac nurse, runs her kitchen line like her unit. Seven years ago, her husband, Alexandria restaurateur Mike Anderson, gifted Donna with the restaurant for Christmas and named it after her, on the condition that she had to run it. Similar to their sister restaurant Pork Barrel BBQ, the family-run restaurant wanted to create a neighborhood ambience. Thanks to her upbringing in the Carolinas, the traditional BBQ joint is infused with vinegar-based items, like Donna's mother's collard greens and mustard-based vinegar sauce and Texas hybrid-inspired dishes smothered in ketchup-based sauces.

All their meats — chicken, beef sausage, burnt ends, turkey, spare ribs and the most popular, pulled pork and brisket — are smoked in-house in their “Southern pride” smoker with blended woods. Their kitchen manager, Chef Lazo, started working for the Andersons in 1984, as a dishwasher, and brings his unique twist to barbecue flavors with his El Salvadoran background, from their mac 'n cheese with green chilis, to their smoked white chicken chili and homemade hot sauce made with home-grown peppers. “Barbecue is a love language,” explains Donna's daughter, Chelsea Anderson, and they intend to keep the spark alive.



PUZUKAN

6464 LANDSDOWNE CENTRE DR.

Ki Bum Kim and his family moved to America from Korea three years ago, chasing the American dream of a rebranded Korean barbecue restaurant. Puzukan, the Americanized word for “the butcher shop” in Korean, is an opportunity to try a new style of Korean barbecue. Since Puzukan opened last year alongside their other restaurant down the street, Matsu Japanese Sushi and Ramen, Kim and his brother have pioneered a favorite: A casual, yet authentic Korean dining experience for Fort Belvoir transplants and locals alike.

There is no questionable ingredients bar — everything is fresh, housemade and made to order. Traditionally cooked using gas or charcoal, they mimic those same smoky flavors with pan cooking and finish on the gas grill. There are two different menus, the classic barbecue bowls with traditional flavors as seen in other Korean restaurants like bibimbap; and signature bowls — their own fusion riffs on Korean flavors, similar to what they had growing up combining fried chicken with rice. The bulgogi is the crowd favorite, alongside their citrus lemonade; the Chi-Bop, chicken and rice and Cha-Bop, brisket and rice, keep the foods of their youth alive — all you need is a side of tiger sauce. ☯

Popular Sides

Chicken Nugget with KFC sauce (spicy)
Honey Butter Chips
Bulgogi Sliders

