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INDUSTRY NEWS



American Culinary Federation
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Professionals of Chicagoland,
founded in 1925, is one of the
fastest-growing chapters of the
American Culinary
Federation (ACF). Click [here](#) for
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Pastrami

One of my first memories of food was at a strip mall deli in my home town. I can't remember the name, but I can see the location in my head; I think I only ate there once or twice. This memory goes back to the late '60s or early '70s. It is a memory of pickles and pastrami. One of the greatest triggers of memory are smells. Think bacon in the morning, apple pie, the smell of yeast and bread baking. However, this memory is more hinged on textures and flavors.

I remember a long strip mall restaurant, tables on one side and counter on the other, napkin holders the beguiled wrapped straws and salt shakers. But it is the memory of the steamed black-crusted brisket and moist, hand-carved nitrate red slices on a piece of rye bread with mustard and onions that stands out. Pickles were just sitting on the table with a basket of bread and wrapped crackers. I have been mesmerized by pastrami ever since. Steamed and sliced always. No lean slices for me-give me the deckle with that moist, succulent seam of fat running through the middle.

There are still a few places left in the states where you can get house-made, not mass-produced pastrami. Katz's in NY is the one I hold as the gold star of places to enjoy the classic. Pastrami needs to be cut with a knife, not a slicer, nor held in a steam table. All the moisture, flavor and identity end up staying in the pan and experience a dehydrating death. I want that in my sandwich!

In lieu of that, true Texas brisket is the next best thing. It has the smoke, the bite from the black pepper (no coriander seeds in a Texas smoke house) and the moisture if done correctly. My litmus test for any smoke house is the quality of their brisket. A little tip to know-look for the red smoke ring and slight rigidity of the slice. It should not fall apart when picked up with your fingers. Any sense of grayed edges, stale smells and crumbly slices and it's been reheated or slow roasted. If there is no cutting board lacquered with years of fat and smoke, then I would probably turn around and look for another joint.

Texas brisket and pastrami are of the same lineage, same cut of beef, just handled slightly differently from brining to straight simple seasoning. Regardless, they need to be cooked and eaten the same day. That is the challenge for most places. They feel that they can't run out. Go to any smoke house worth its weight and know that they run out of food every day! People don't wait six



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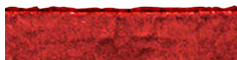
The Cicerone Certification Program certifies and educates beer professionals in order to elevate the beer experience for consumers. cicerone.org.



The Craft Beer Networking Group is comprised of professionals from a wide variety of industries, and we meet approximately every 6 weeks at different breweries or craft beer bars in Chicago for two main reasons:

1. Networking
2. Enjoying craft beer

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Eater is the source for people

hours in line at Franklin BBQ to get yesterday's scraps! The aura of both is the skill of the carver; they understand that every brisket is different, and they take time to visualize the beef. You need to navigate its shape, thickness and the direction of the grain. Is it a left or right brisket? Some may say that there is a difference in texture in each. With a sharp knife and conviction, a skilled person will slice, trim and portion accordingly. A good sandwich or plate doesn't have meat hanging out the side or over the edge. It's all about the details.

So why this subject? It probably has to do with the same reason I drink great artisan beer. There are craftsmen and women painstakingly taking the time to do things right. It's not about volume or speed to market. I am also tired of really bad commercialized pastrami and smoked brisket. Also, I don't think salmon, turkey or even duck are great candidates for pastrami. Just saying.

So, what does this all mean? I've started making my own Texas pastrami. Best of both worlds. I am also making the pickles and the sauerkraut. Rye bread is a little different story, but don't be surprised.

- Chef John Reed, CEC, CCA

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Katz's Delicatessen



BBQ SMOQUE



DRINKS

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Another choice is a really malty lager such as Vienna Lager. Modelo's lineage is a Vienna.



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