

Barbecue Beef Brisket

Brisket, cook it right and it is tender, juicy, and flavorful. Cook it wrong and it is like a wrangler's leather chaps. So let's walk through this and make sure we get it right!

Yield: Plan on about one pound of meat per person.

Preparation time: 10 minutes to trim and rub the meat, and up to 24 hours to let it marinate in the rub.

Cooking time: Your times will vary because each cooker and each brisket is different. If you follow this recipe and cook at 225 deg. it should take about 90 minutes per pound. Remember that is just a rule of thumb. I have had 4 pound briskets take 8-10 hours! So get a good meat thermometer and use it. If the brisket is done sooner than you planned you can hold it in a faux cambro or in the oven at 190°F.

Resting time: When the meat is cooked, this recipe recommends you let the meat rest, wrapped in foil, wrapped in a towel, buried in a plastic cooler, for another 1-3 hours. This is a great fudge factor that lets you take the meat off when it is ready and hold it until the guests are ready.

Ingredients

1 Hilltop Pastures Family Farm Brisket

Olive oil

Big Bad Beef Rub

Optional: 1/8 cup of beef broth per pound of raw meat for injecting

Do this

1) **Trim.** Rinse the meat and dry it with paper towels. Trim off some of the fat cap but leave at least 1/4". On the meaty side of the brisket, make sure there is no silverskin, a tough thin membrane, left. Peel this tough thin skin off if there is any remaining. This is very important.

2) **Pump.** This is an optional step. If you have a hypodermic for injecting meat, now's the time to use it. Pump in about 1/8 cup of beef broth per pound of raw meat by inserting the needle parallel to the grain in several locations and back it out as you press the plunger. Do it in the sink and be careful so you don't get squirted in the eye. Use broth only. All we want here is moisture. We don't want the fluid to mask the flavor of the meat.

3) **Rub.** Before you apply the Big Bad Beef Rub, notice the direction of the grain of the flat and remember this so you can carve it perpendicular to the grain. Coat the meat lightly with oil and sprinkle the rub liberally on all exposed meat and rub it in. We coat the meat with oil first because many of the flavors in the rub are oil soluble. Some folks use a slather of mustard first, but it is water based and will not dissolve the flavors as well as oil. If you can, let the meat sit for 1 to 2 hours to allow the rub to penetrate a bit and form a moist paste that will become your crust. Letting it sit up to 24 hours is great too. I **strongly** recommend you use a digital remote thermometer, especially if you are not an expert with brisket, and insert the probe with the tip centered in the thickest part of the meat.

4) **Preheat.** OK, before we begin, it is important to note that brisket is an inexact science, and the timing can vary significantly depending on the size of your brisket, its moisture and fat content,

and the nature of your cooker, not to mention the accuracy of your thermometer. But the method I describe has a long period of resting in an insulated cooler (warmer in this case), and that time is flexible so you can use that buffer time to keep dinner on schedule. Set up your grill for indirect cooking. Indirect cooking is the heat on one side of the grill and the meat on the other. Put a pan of broth or water under the meat to add moisture to the air. Get the temp stabilized at about 225°F. It is crucial to keep the temp low or else the proteins can seize up and squeeze out all the juices. And this can happen fast on brisket, so monitor your temp carefully. Brisket is not forgiving!

5) **Cook.** Put the meat on the cooker, fat side up. If the temp starts to run up, start mopping the meat with water or apple juice to keep it cool until you get the oven temp back down to 225°F. Add wood right after the meat and whenever the smoke stops for the first two hours. Keep an eye on the water in the pan. Don't let it evaporate. After three hours, turn the meat over if the color is different from top to bottom. Otherwise leave it alone. I do not recommend mopping, basting, or spritzing. It just lowers the temp of the meat, and lets heat out of the cooker and oxygen into the coals if you are using charcoal. The meat temp will move steadily upward to a spot called "the stall" or "the conversion zone", somewhere between 140-150°F. Once in the zone, it will seem to take forever to rise. This is the magic time when the connective tissues made of collagens begin to dissolve and create fabulous flavor and texture. When you hit the stall, don't panic and crank the heat up. Once the internal temp is past 170°F it will probably rise more rapidly. This may seem way overcooked, especially since steak is well-done at about 150°F, but we need to cook brisket to a much higher temperature to make it tender. We're shooting for 180°F. Rule of thumb: 90 minutes per pound. If it gets done sooner, you can hold it in a faux cambro or in the oven at 190°F.

6) **Crutch.** When the meat hits 180°F take it off and wrap it in a double layer of heavy-duty foil. Pour a cup of beef broth or beer over the top of the meat before you seal the foil. Then seal it tight. Put the wrapped meat back on the smoker for an hour. This step, the Texas Crutch, generates a bit of steam which tenderizes the meat. So when is it ready? The experts say you really can't tell by temperature. Each brisket is different. The pros can tell when it is ready by feel. Some talk about a gelatinous bounce it has when they poke it because the connective tissues have melted. They call it the "wabba wabba" point. Others stick a fork in the side of the flat and twist. If it turns easily, it is ready. Until you get a feel for this, I recommend you pull it off at about 190°F and no higher than 205°F. It should only take about an hour in foil to hit 190°F.

7) **Rest.** When the temp hits 190°F, get your plastic cooler, line it with a towel, blanket, or crumpled newspaper and put the meat, still in foil, into the cooler on top of the lining. Leave the thermometer probe in. If the foil is leaking, put the meat in a large pan first. The lining is important to prevent the plastic from warping or cracking. Close the lid and let the hot meat sit in the cooler for 1-3 hours until you are ready to eat. Do not let the temp of the meat fall below 145°F while it is in the cooler or else you could get a tummy ache. If you have a tight cooler it should hold the meat well above 160°F for hours.

8) **Slice.** Brisket dries out quickly once it is cut. Make sure everyone is ready to eat before you start carving. Make sure to slice across the grain about a ¼" thick. Now sit back and enjoy!!!