

## *Perfect Pulled Pork*

**Yield.** 3.5 pounds of meat, enough for 10 generous sandwiches. Leftovers freeze nicely.

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

**Cooking time.** Allow 8 to 12 hours or 1.5 to 2 hours per pound at 225°F. If you kick the temp up to 280°F, you can cut cooking time to about 1 hour per pound. Allow plenty of advance time and if necessary, use a cooler as a faux Cambro to hold the meat

**Pulling time.** 30 minutes if you do it with your fingers, 10 minutes with Bear Paws

### **Ingredients**

1 Hilltop Pastures Family Farm butt or picnic pork roast, about 4-5 pounds

3 tablespoons of olive oil

1/3 cup Memphis Dust

2 cups wood for smoke

*Skip the marinade, injections, and brines. Use a good rub, and let the smoke flavor it.*

### **Do this**

1) Trim *most* of the of fat from the exterior of the meat but not all of it. Leave no more than 1/8". Some folks like to leave it all on hoping it will melt and baste the meat, but I want the seasonings *on the meat*, not on the fat, and I want the meat to get a crunchy flavorful, seasoned bark. Most of the roasts I cook are 4 to 6 pounds, pretty well trimmed, and tied with butcher's twine to keep them from falling apart. Don't worry if your tying isn't fancy, you're going to throw it out, just rope it so it doesn't fall apart. I have skipped the tying too and I was able to manage.

2) Rinse and thoroughly dry the meat. Oil the meat with olive oil, coating all surfaces. This will help the rub adhere and also help dissolve the oil soluble flavors in the rub and carry it into the meat. Some folks like to slather it with yellow mustard first. I have tried it this way and I do not think it does anything noticeable. Besides, mustard does not contain oil, so oil soluble flavors in the rub don't dissolve. Cover your roast generously with Memphis Dust. Let it sit in the fridge for an hour or three, or better yet overnight.

3) Insert a digital probe and position the tip right in the center. Make sure it is not touching the bone or within 1/2" of the bone. Fire up the cooker to about 225°F and set it up for 2-zone indirect smoke cooking. Put the meat on, right on the grate, not in a pan, add 1/2 cup of wood chips, pellets, or chunks to the coals, and go drink a coffee. You've got plenty of time. Just check your cooker every hour or so to make sure the fuel is sufficient and you are holding at 225 to 250°F. If it goes up to 300°F, don't worry. Pork roast is forgiving. But try to keep it down under 250°F. Add additional doses of wood, 1/4 cup at a time, every 30 minutes for the first two hours. Don't open the cooker to spritz or mop the meat. Opening the lid only screws up the temperature and humidity in the cooker so keep it to a minimum.

Allow 1.5 to 2 hours per pound but it might take more or less. Each hunk of meat is different, and rain, wind, ambient temp will impact cooking times. The temp will rise steadily to about 140 to 150°F. and slow down for a loooooonnnng while as moisture moves to the surface and the collagens turn to liquid. It might hold there for an hour or more. This is called "the stall" or "the zone". Don't panic and don't crank the heat. Be patient. Magic is happening.

**Option.** Most competition cooks use a technique called the Texas Crutch. Some will wrap their roasts tightly in a couple of layers of heavy duty foil when it hits about 170°F or the color they like, add

Adapted from: [www.amazingribs.com](http://www.amazingribs.com)

about 1 cup of apple juice or some other secret elixir to the package, and put it back in the cooker. Others put the meat in an aluminum pan on a roasting rack to keep it out of the liquid, add the apple juice, and cover it tightly with foil. The process allows the meat to cook in a high humidity environment and that seems to tenderize it a bit. Then, when the temp hits about 190°F, they'll take off the foil, put it back in to firm up the surface, and then it's on to the next step. The Crutch is a nice touch, and it works, but most of the time, I don't bother.

4) **Is it ready?** When it hits 190°F, it may be ready, and it may not be ready. But it's time to check. The exterior should be dark brown. Some rubs and cookers will make the meat look black like a meteorite, but it is not burnt and it doesn't taste burnt. There may be glistening bits of melted fat. On a gas cooker it may look shiny pink. If there is a bone, use a glove or paper towel to protect your fingers and wiggle the bone. If it turns easily and comes out of the meat, the collagens have melted and you are done. If there is no bone, use the "stick a fork in it method". Insert a fork and try to rotate it 90 degrees. If it turns with only a little torque, you're done. If it's not done, close the lid and go drink a wait for 30 minutes. If the internal temp hits 190°F but the meat is still not tender, reduce the heat in your cooker to about 190°F and hold it there for as much as another hour. It should then be done. If not, you've just got a tougher roast. Sometimes that just happens. Wrap tough roasts in aluminum foil and let them go for another hour, but don't take them above 200°F or else the muscle fibers will start giving up moisture and toughen. If you can't control the temp on your cooker, wrap the meat in heavy duty foil and move it indoors into a 190°F oven. Do not add sauce while it is on the cooker. That comes after you pull it, if at all.

5) When it is finally ready, go ahead, take a taste. You should notice a thick flavorful crust, and right below the telltale "smoking", the bright pink color caused by smoke mixing with combustion gases and moisture. Let it rest for 30 to 60 minutes. If you are more than an hour from mealtime, you can leave the meat on the cooker with the heat off or put it in the indoor oven and hold it there by dialing the temp down to about 150°F. If you are more than two hours from mealtime, wrap it in foil to keep it from drying out and hold it at 150°F. If you are taking the meat to a party, use a faux cambro, which is nothing more than a tight plastic cooler in which you can hold the meat. Leave the probe in the meat, wrap the hunk tightly in foil, wrap the foil with more towels, and put the whole thing in the cooler. Fill up the cooler with more towels, blankets, or newspaper to keep the meat insulated. Hang the thermometer cord over the lid of the cooler, and close it tightly. Plug the cord into the readout and make sure it never drops below 145°F. Just know that this technique will soften the bark and change the texture of the meat very slightly.

6) About 30 minutes before sit down, put the meat into a large pan to catch drippings. Pull the clod apart with Bear Paws, gloved hands, or forks. Discard big chunks of fat. If you wish you can slice it or chop it like they do in North Carolina, but I think you lose less moisture by pulling it apart by hand since the meat separates into bundles of muscle fibers, hence the name pulled pork. Try not to eat all the flavorful crusty bits when you are doing the pulling, and distribute them evenly throughout. Make sure you save any flavorful drippings and pour them over the meat.

For big parties I will smoke 3 or more roasts, pull them, and then put them in a big pan. I add about 1/2 cup of water per 5 pounds, and about 1 tablespoon of butter per pound. I carry it to the party in a *cold* cooler. When I get to the party I heat it in a slow cooker. Occasionally I will add the sauce before I leave to make sure it is moist and easy to serve. Just don't use so much sauce that you can't taste the meat and the smoke.