



Worsley of R & D Sales with his ribs in front of an Ole Hickory Pit.

Dreaming of Barbeque and Airplanes

One Man's Quest to Share his Passion

Elizabeth Partridge

When you meet Robert Worsley of R & D Sales, you get the sneaking suspicion you're in for something special. By the time you've learned the official barbeque handshake, which is a vigorous touching of the elbows, you've already noticed the gleam of excitement in his eyes. It doesn't take long before your little sneaking suspicion is confirmed: Worsley is a character. I had the luxury of spending an afternoon with Worsley as he prepared a barbeque dinner using an Ole Hickory Pit, Bad Byron's Butt Rub® and Ole Ray's® Sauces. The smell alone attracted a crowd and he sold a bottle of sauce within 15 minutes of our meeting.

These products may sound familiar. Worsley and his teammates have been featured on several programs on the Food Network. You see, Worsley and his cohorts from Bad Byron's Butt Rub® are well known in the barbeque world. Worsley will be the first to say, "The reason we're on the Food Network is because we win." One taste of his culinary gold and you know he says this with sincerity.

He began his career by cutting meat in 1976 – the same year he began flying. A crop dusting uncle sparked his interest in planes as a child. By 1978, he acquired his private pilot's license. His knowledge of meat came from years of experience in slaughterhouses and retail grocery. Worsley has worked hard to get where he is, teaching cooking classes, performing demonstrations and winning competitive cooking tournaments. It isn't easy work, but it is apparent the man loves what he does. As he says, "I've always wanted to have my own business. It turns out that I'm good at cooking, and I'm making my living cooking barbeque and teaching people. It is very rewarding for me to take someone who has never done barbeque before and teach them how to make world-class barbeque in either the commercial or home setting."

Worsley mentions three Ps when it comes to learning barbeque: Patience, practice and perseverance. It is imperative to learn what good barbeque tastes like, as well as what it feels and looks like. A perfectly cooked set of glazed ribs is beautiful. The smell is unreal and the meat is tender, juicy and flavorful. The taste is incredible – you only know that you must have more.

As the afternoon flew past, I realized this sort of lifestyle also requires passion. Worsley cooked constantly while explaining the inner workings of his built-to-order pits. These machines, and his enthusiasm for them, are impressive. With roughly 15 models to choose from, anyone can become a world-class barbeque master. They run on electricity and gas and potential customers can choose between LP and natural gases, you simply add the wood of your choice. Worsley's favorite is Pecan. That's one of many benefits to owning an Ole Hickory Pit: they can be customized!

The pits are insulated with mineral wool that can withstand 1,200 degrees of heat. It takes roughly \$1.25 an hour to run one of the larger pits – the Model EL-ED, which has 72 square feet of cooking surface. For the commercial operator, it virtually pays for itself in saved labor costs and wood costs over the traditional wood-burning barbeque pits. For the at-home barbeque enthusiast, the CTO (Convecture Tri-Oven) would be ideal. The heat and smoke come in the rear of the pit and exit through two flues on either side. The racks rotate in the same direction of the airflow. Not only is the CTO self contained, but easy to clean. Just use a wire brush on the racks and a wide putty knife to scrape out the bottom. After a brief instruction period with Worsley, anyone can be on their way to becoming a barbeque master.

One of the best things about an Ole Hickory Pit is that they have ETL listings and are approved for inside usage. The equipment meets all sanitary and gas regulation requirements. They can be used indoors or outdoors. Worsley mentioned a grocery retailer that actually installed a machine into the wall of a store. "These are proven pieces of equipment," Worsley says as he indicates the CTO and the Model EL-ED, "that operate very well in commercial settings, as well as the home." One of Worsley's goals is to have an airport restaurant serve world-class barbeque. If pilots will fly in for a \$100 hamburger, they'll fly in for the best ribs they've ever tasted. What a great way to combine his two passions.

When I asked what sets his machines apart from other barbeque pits, Worsley lit up. He's proud of the products he sells. The main reason, he tells me, "is consistent temperature all the way across. Most people don't know the temperature in the average barbeque pit. You have to refuel them every few hours, which changes the temperature, so you can never be sure when the meat is at its best. With an Ole Hickory Pit, you just flip the switch and go to bed." These pits are thermostatically controlled. Thermostatic control equals fantastic barbeque. How would I know? I also had the luxury of tasting the dinner Mr. Worsley prepared which included ribs, beef brisket, pulled pork, chicken and smoked turkey breast. Perhaps Worsley's own explanation will suffice, "You will never have better barbeque than the barbeque you choose to cook yourself – unless you meet someone like me." ■

For more information and recipes, visit www.howtobarbeque.com and www.buttrub.com or call 229-758-2828 or 229-416-6127.



While both Ole Hickory Pits meet commercial specifications, they come in different sizes to meet the customer's needs.