

The MABA Meat Sheet

BARBECUE NEWS FROM THE MID-ATLANTIC REGION



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A Message from the President



Hello MABA Members!

As I sat down to write this message my first thought was to reflect on the season as a whole. After all, we're getting into the fall and the competition season should be starting to wind down.

But the more I looked at what's ahead, the more I realized that this season is doing anything but winding down.

Instead, MABA is headed for a sprint to the finish.

Here in our region, we still have three MABA State Cups to give away — Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey — along with an incredible stretch of MABA contests on four straight weekends before we finally wrap things up at Frosty Butts in November. With several tight points races still very much up for grabs, every one of those weekends could have a huge impact on the final standings.

And there's plenty to follow outside our region, too. Several MABA teams will be making the trip to the Jack and the Royal, and there's no doubt the entire MABA family will be cheering them on. We also have several teams firmly in the KCBS Team of the Year races, and a strong finish could very well see a MABA team sitting on top when it's all said and done.

A message from the President - Continued from page 1

But beyond the contests, State Cups and points chases, there's another reason I've always thought this part of the season is special.

As we get closer to the finish line, these weekends become some of our last chances to spend time with our "BBQ Family" before the offseason arrives. For me, that means a night around the campfire or a 9:22 shot carries just a little more meaning than it did back in April or May.

We've been on this crazy ride together for months. We've been there for the ups and downs, the great calls and the bad tables, the heartbreakers and maybe even a win or two we're still not quite sure we deserved. And now, suddenly, we can see the finish line.

It all comes down to a handful of weekends.

A handful of chances to put it all on the line. To watch teams try to hold onto a lead, or another catch fire and make an incredible late-season run. To chase one more trophy, one more call, or just enjoy one more Saturday with the people who make this crazy hobby so much fun.

However it turns out, I know we're going to have a great time getting there.

And when that last turn-in is over, the awards are handed out and the final smoker is shut down, then we can finally take a look back and reflect on what has already been one incredible season.

Until then, there's still plenty of BBQ left.

Joe Rouse - President

**SHARE THE LOVE,
BUILD OUR COMMUNITY!**

Great BBQ starts with great people.
Invite a friend to join MABA and help our community keep growing stronger.

REFER A FRIEND!

YOU GET 2 ENTRIES INTO THE RAFFLE!*

**REFER A FRIEND TO SIGN UP
AND YOU'LL GET 2 ENTRIES INTO THE RAFFLE AT THE ANNUAL BANQUET!**

SHARE THE LOVE
Introduce your friends to MABA and the BBQ community.

BUILD COMMUNITY
The more of us, the stronger we all become.

YOU GET 2 ENTRIES
For each friend who joins, you'll get 2 raffle entries at the Annual Banquet!*

LET'S GROW MABA—TOGETHER!

REFER TODAY. WIN TOGETHER. BBQ FOREVER.

*Referring member must be listed on the new member's application.
Referral must be made by the application deadline to qualify.

TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

MABA is excited to share with all of its members that our social media presence continues to increase.



Our Facebook groups are beaming with active participation and membership engagement. Views and engagement are up as well! We are excited to wrap up the competition year and spotlight our teams all over social media!

Rich Rybak – Social Media



Burnt Ends BBQ Supply

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MABA members
10% off all items!

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at checkout.

Code is valid through December 31, 2026.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Three Cup Chicken (San Bei Ji)

Submitted by Jake Artz of K-Town Pit Que

A quick recipe idea for contest chicken prep. If you're looking to switch things up from the usual stir-fry, Three Cup Chicken (San Bei Ji) is an absolute killer option for MABA teams with prep chicken trimmings.

It hits a fantastic balance of savory, sweet, and aromatic flavors thanks to the sesame oil, garlic, ginger, and fresh Thai basil glaze. It holds up extremely well for prep and keeps the chicken incredibly juicy.

Servings: 4

Ingredients:

- 1.5 lbs. chicken thighs (bone-in or boneless skin-on, cut into bite-sized pieces)
- 10–12 whole garlic cloves, peeled
- 2-inch knob ginger, sliced into thin coins
- 1–2 red chili peppers, sliced (optional)
- ¼ cup roasted sesame oil
- ¼ cup soy sauce (3 tbsp light soy sauce + 1 tbsp dark soy sauce)
- ¼ cup Shaoxing rice wine
- 1 tbsp rock sugar (or granulated sugar)
- 2 cups fresh Thai basil leaves

Instructions:

1. Sear: Heat 1 tbsp sesame oil in a wok/pan over medium-high heat. Sear chicken skin-side down until golden brown (5–7 mins). Set chicken aside; keep rendered fat in the pan.
2. Aromatics: Drop heat to medium, add the rest of the sesame oil, garlic, ginger, and chilies. Fry until fragrant and garlic turns golden (~2 mins).
3. Simmer: Return chicken to the pan. Add Shaoxing wine, soy sauce mixture, and sugar. Cover and simmer on medium-low for 10 mins.
4. Glaze: Remove the lid, turn heat to medium-high, and stir until the sauce thickens into a rich, glossy glaze (3–5 mins).
5. Finish: Turn off heat, fold in the fresh Thai basil until wilted, and serve over rice.

REMINDER: HELP PRESERVE MABA'S HISTORY!

As a reminder, the MABA Board of Directors has created a new **Historian** position to help preserve the memories, accomplishments, and stories that have made MABA what it is today.

We are currently building an archive of MABA history, and **we need your help!**

Do you have any of the following?

 **Photos & Videos** – Pictures or videos from past MABA events and gatherings. Approximate dates and names of people pictured are especially helpful.

 **Old MABA Media** – Flyers, newsletters, newspaper articles, event materials, or other MABA-related items. Digital copies are great—no need to send physical originals.

 **Stories & Memories** – Favorite memories, milestones, funny stories, tall tales, or legends from your time in MABA. Firsthand stories from the people who were there are some of the most valuable pieces of history we can preserve!

 **Old MABA Records** – If you've served on a previous Board of Directors or in another MABA role, you may have old records tucked away in a folder, box, or shoebox. If you think something might be relevant, we'd love to hear about it.

 **Early TOY Rankings** – We are especially interested in finding Team of the Year rankings from the years before BBQData.com began tracking them electronically. Many of those teams are no longer competing, and records of their accomplishments may be difficult to find. If you remember anything—or know someone who might have old records—please reach out!

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE

Send any photos, records, stories, or other historical information to:



Stephen Hypes: stephenhypes@yahoo.com
MABA Board: maba@mabbqa.com

When in doubt, send it! Something that may seem small today could become an important part of preserving MABA's history for future generations.

Thank you for helping us preserve the people, memories, accomplishments, and stories that make MABA special!

Best regards,

Stephen Hypes – MABA Historian

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Code is valid now through December 31, 2026.



A MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

We made it through summer and to the second edition of the MABA Meat Sheet. I would like to make sure our newsletter truly reflects the heart and soul of the organization — and that means hearing from **you**, our MABA members.

Whether you are a seasoned pitmaster with a full trophy case, a new team just getting started, or a backyard enthusiast working on your weekend brisket, your stories are what make our community great. We want this newsletter to be a place where we share our collective passion, knowledge, and love for all things barbecue.

To make that happen, I am officially calling on all members to send in your contributions. Here is how you can get involved:

- **Share Your Photos:** Did you nail the perfect turn-in? Snap a great shot of your team at a recent competition? Send us your best photos from contests, your backyard, or MABA events.
- **Pitch Your Ideas:** If you have an idea for an article, a recurring column, or a feature you would love to see, let me know.
- **Submit Your Recipes:** Have a non-secret, non-competition protein recipe, or a recipe for your favorite barbecue side dish? Share the wealth with your fellow members.
- **Highlight Member Milestones:** Let us know about local charity cooks, new catering ventures, or personal barbecue achievements so we can celebrate them together.

This is your newsletter, and we want your voice in it. Please email your pictures, ideas, and drafts directly



to me at maba@mabbqa.com or rvasold@verizon.net with the subject line "MABA Newsletter." so we can include them in a future issue.

Hope to see you at a contest soon!

Ron Vasold – Secretary

REGIONAL CONTESTS THROUGH Q4

Keystone Classic Cookoff – Harrisburg, PA
10/2/2026 - 10/3/2026

MABA State Cup Contest

MD State BBQ Bash – Bel Air, MD
10/9/2026 - 10/10/2026

MABA State Cup Contest

The MoCo Smoke Show – Wheaton, MD
10/16/2026 - 10/17/2026

Red White & Que – West Creek, NJ
10/23/2026 - 10/25/2026

MABA State Cup Contest (Saturday)

Foothills Smoke-Off Challenge – Lenoir, NC
10/23/2026 - 10/24/2026

Frosty Butts BBQ Throwdown – New Market, VA
11/6/2026 - 11/7/2026



MABA By-Laws Committee

The MABA Board approved updated By Laws on September 2, 2026. The updated By Laws are available for your review on the Mid-Atlantic Barbecue Association website.

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO HOKE COLBURN

Note: The entire series of "THE WORLD ACCORDING TO HOKE COLBURN" articles will be published on the MABA web site. **Chapter 2 - Organizers – the Make It Break it of BBQ Comps** was posted on August 23 under News and Announcements and the MABA Blog. Please be sure to visit the site to stay up to date with entire series of articles and all of the other great things happening in your organization. - MABA Secretary

Chapter 3 - Reps – The Umpire in Chiefs of BBQ events

Back in my younger days, I played softball. A LOT of softball. Weeknights and weekends were filled with attending games. Tournaments in MD, NC, GA, FL to name a few. All one had to do was call and say they were shorthanded and out the door I'd go in a heartbeat. As I got older, I was asked to become an umpire. Later I became the Umpire in Chief.

So, what's softball got to do with BBQ? Surprisingly a lot.

For a BBQ contest we need an Organizer of the event, Reps to enforce the rules, Judges to judge the entries and Teams to cook the meats. For a ball tournament we need a Tournament Director (Organizer), Umpire In Chief (Reps), Umpires (judges) and Ball teams (cook teams). Each of these positions serve in the same capacity. An umpire makes a judgement call where a judge makes a judgement on an entry. A rep makes a ruling as does a UIC when something is protested or questioned. On the site of the event/tournament, the UIC/Rep is responsible for making rulings. In KCBS, Rule 1 covers this –

- 1. The decision and interpretations of the KCBS Rules and Regulations are at the discretion of the KCBS Contest Representatives at the contest. Their decisions and interpretations are final to the extent consistent with the rules.***

In a nut shell, the Rep's decision is final.

In KCBS a team of reps is assigned to a contest organizer upon a contest being sanctioned. This team of reps should be working with the organizer from day one. For returning organizers, Reps make sure they are aware of any new changes in the sport of BBQ. For new Organizers helping them make their event one that teams and judges alike will want to return to. In both cases, checking on specifics that the organizer can share at that time as to how things are coming along for them.

Reps are assigned two to a contest to begin with. If said contest will have more than 50 teams attending, additional reps are assigned. With each additional 25 teams an additional rep is assigned. That answers why sometimes you may see more than one rep at a contest.

What makes a rep? A rep is normally nominated by an experienced rep. I was nominated by a rep who was retiring. Not specific to taking his place but there would be a need in the general area for someone to take his contest. Reps also are needed where contests are located. Areas of the country with few contests need fewer reps.

When I became a rep it was required to have been a KCBS Member for minimum of 2 years, have achieved the rank of Master Judge, be a up to date/current member and as mentioned prior, be nominated for such. The Rep Chair of the KCBS Board will then make a decision if a rep is needed in the area. If so, will provide the documentation for the RAT..... Its pronounced RAT as it stands for Rep At training. I would have gone with RIT as in Rep In Training but who am I to argue tradition. Plus calling a trainee a rat, well it just fits. The documentation requires a RAT to attend 4 contests and work as a student of repping. Each successive contest they attend will increase the level they need to show experience in. Such as conducting a judge meeting, keying scores, checking in boxes, changing box numbers, etc. By the 4th contest they should be able to handle all parts of a KCBS event. Once completed their name is brought to the Board for a final vote.

The World According to Hoke Colburn - Continued from page 6

Reps arrive the day before the contest. Some will help do the meat inspections. Alex Brown and I will do the meat inspections when we are assigned as the reps but other contests it may be the organizer who handles. We will also number and hand out the turn in boxes. For newer teams, we will talk with them longer to make sure they know the important times like cooks meeting and turn ins. We check to make sure they have legal garnish on hand. We want those newer teams not to suffer a disqualification for something we can maybe head off in advance.

Some reps do not. There is not a policy or rule that that they do what we do. We do it as we want it to be a great event for the teams. And if we can help the teams in some small way, we feel it makes them feel wanted, respected and may choose to compete again at this contest or another contest.

How do reps number boxes is a question I am asked occasionally. There is not a rule or policy on how to do so. One could just start at the top of the list of teams an organizer provides the rep with. But some organizers place the teams in alpha order. Some give them to us in order of signing up. In either case, a team could then figure out their alternate box number by knowing this info. For me, I take an added step. I use a number generator program online to assign my box numbers to teams. It's a random sorting. Whoever is listed as team 1 on the list might be box number 8, 24, 2, 19, or could still be 1. It's whatever the program assigns in random order.

Reps also are charged with having a judge meeting where we reinforce and remind the judges of the rules. Occasionally something comes down for the KCBS office we need to make the judges aware of like forks. One of the most talked about, time wasted, policy changed from month to month topics I can ever recall.

We are responsible for accurate box number changes, scoring and auditing, printing results, go over said results with the organizer or their announcer, attending awards to ensure the correct names are called at correct times, and then await teams for up to 30 minutes following awards in case there is a question of a score or they want an audit of their box alternate number. If teams seem to be leaving and no one is coming, then we are allowed to leave earlier than the 30 minutes.

So, what can one learn from having their box audited and how do you do so? Once awards are completed, the reps are to head back to the judging area and wait for up to 30 minutes. In this time frame a team may come and ask one of two things – Audit their scores and or audit their boxes. To do so a team will come to the reps and ask to see their boxes. We will get a third party to look at the alternate ID sheet, and the team will advise their box number. The third party will then knowing the alternate number be shown the label on the box. We will peel back the label and show the number below, the teams box number. This will confirm that the box is correct to the alternate number and your box was not mislabeled with another team's alternate number. Pretty much same happens with auditing the score card. We show the cards to the 3rd party and then the SCORE program where they can see the scores all match.

We are all human and mistakes can happen. Many reps will use a double set of eyes to check alternate numbers being put onto the boxes. We will always have one person pull the sticker for the box and set it on the side of your box. A second person will then check to make sure the number matches to the alternate number and place the label over the box number. When it comes to keying scores, we do a double audit there as well where a second set of eyes will verify the scores entered. And we do the same with comment cards to team detail sheets. If by chance you have ever had a sheet that had a little orange or red dot beside a score, that's me verifying the comment card matches a score on your detail sheet. Why? Because many times multiple judges may give a same score. I then need to make sure I have multiple such scores on your sheet. Otherwise, if you only have one score of say 989, and yet two judges said they gave a 989 for this box, one of them recorded their score or the box number incorrectly. We then have to decide which card to give you.

We utilize the rules and regulations provided by KCBS. In addition, we have a package of Rep Advisory's that are not covered by the rules but are important helpful answers to what to do when a box is dropped, or if a judge wishes to wear gloves, or how fried chicken can be turned in, etc. Reps also have monthly meetings where we

The World According to Hoke Colburn - Continued from page 7



can discuss changes to the SCORE program or if something occurred at a contest not covered by an advisory or rule and how to handle in the future.

These are but some of the ways Reps help to make the contest run smoothly. Hope this may answer some questions of what exactly we all do.

Seize ya next time.

“Hoke Colburn” aka THE Bill Jones, PhB

MABA Board of Directors Nominations Now Open!

The Mid-Atlantic BBQ Association is seeking nominations for candidates to serve on the **Board of Directors for the upcoming year.**

This is your opportunity to help shape the future of MABA and ensure that our organization continues to grow, support its members, and promote the sport of competitive barbecue throughout our region.

You may nominate another MABA member—or nominate yourself! If you know someone who would be a strong representative for our membership, committed to the organization, and willing to help guide MABA into the future, we encourage you to submit their name. Members who are interested in becoming more involved are also strongly encouraged to put their own name forward.

Don't wait for someone else to nominate a great candidate—get involved and make your voice heard!

More information about available positions and the election timeline will be provided soon. In the meantime, if you already have someone in mind—or would like to run yourself—please contact us by email. We encourage all members to participate and help us build a strong Board of Directors for the year ahead.

Thank you,

Stephen Hypes

Nominations Committee Chair

stephenhypes@yahoo.com

MABA Board of Directors: maba@mabbqa.com



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Code is valid for the 2026 season

From the Editor: Each issue of our newsletter will feature spotlights of the people who make a difference in barbecue in our region. We will spotlight teams, organizers, KCBS representatives, and judges who are interested in telling their story. In this edition, we are fortunate to feature Luke Darnell, the Pitmaster of Old Virginia Smoke and Master Judge, Bill DeHoff. Both of them provided an insight into their world of barbecue. Reach out if you would like to be featured in a future newsletter.

Old Virginia Smoke Pitmaster: Luke Darnell



Introduction: Old Virginia Smoke was founded in 2013 by Luke and his wife Kim. To their credit, they have 18 Grand Championships, 28 Reserve Grand Championships, and 4 World Championships. He has been featured on Food Network's *BBQ USA* with Michael Symon, he hosts the *Pitmaster, an Old Virginia Smoke Podcast*, and he is a sales representative for Smokin Brothers and Gateway Drum Smokers.

MABA - When and how did your team get started? How many contests have you entered? GC'ed? RGC'ed?

Luke - We started in 2013, after cooking at home for a long time. Was on a different team for a while, and we decided to start our own. We've now cooked 315 contests, with 18 Grand Championships and 28 Reserve Grand Championships.

MABA - Tell us about your first BBQ competition: what contest/where was it/ how did it go, etc.?

Luke - Ahhh, the BBQ Jamboree in Fredericksburg, VA. We brought everything but the kitchen sink. But, we finished in the teens in chicken and ribs, got slaughtered in pork and brisket. We knew we were gonna keep at it though and get everything dialed in.

MABA - Tell us about your favorite competition and what makes it so great.

Luke - Gotta be Chillin' and Grillin' in the Glades in Wise, VA. Greg Cross goes all out to make sure the teams have everything they need. The town goes all out. The vibe is amazing, it's always a little cooler temps up there and we have nothing but good memories from there. We will never miss that contest.

MABA - What is your greatest barbecue memory?

Luke - In 2019, we cooked Kora Kares up in Maine for the first time, and I got to cook with a Shriner's patient named Emily. She was, and still is, one of the most amazing people I've met. We had a fantastic time cooking together, and she finished second with her entry! I'll never ever forget that experience.

MABA - What is your favorite meat to cook and why?

Luke - I love cooking brisket. It's the most difficult, but the most rewarding. I absolutely love when it comes out perfect.

MABA - Other than competition food, what is your favorite food at a contest?

Luke - I'm not sure I'd call it food, but I definitely enjoy a good bourbon at a contest.

MABA - Do you have any superstitions, rituals, or lucky charms you rely on when competing?

Luke - I used to have a lot more. Now, there aren't too many. Lately it's been listening to Bad Bunny's Titi Mi Pregunto during rib turn in. Gets the juices flowing.

MABA - What is one part of your process that would surprise other teams?

Luke - I don't know if anything that I do is a surprise at this point. It might just be openly acknowledging things that I do that absolutely make no difference, but they worked once, so I do them. I think it's important to remember that.

Old Virginia Smoke Pitmaster: Luke Darnell - Continued from page 9

MABA - What is one piece of advice that you would give a new team just starting out in competition barbecue?

Luke - Take a class. That's important to not only new teams, but every team. I try and take a class every year. There's nothing like your first class...it's like drinking out of a fire hose at how much you didn't know. And in case you were wondering...there's a couple OVS classes coming this offseason...hint hint.

MABA - If you could replace one of the four meats, what would you get rid of and what would you replace it with?

Luke - I wouldn't replace any of the meats. But I might add beef ribs, because I LOVE some beef ribs.

MABA - Do you have any BBQ mentors?

Luke - The list is too many to mention. But I'll start with Chris Hart from iQue who taught my first class. And Chris Cappell, who is the founder of Dizzy Pig and a BBQ genius.

MABA - Would you rather have bigger payouts or cooler trophies?

Luke - I have never cared about payouts too much unless I feel like an organizer is taking advantage of teams. Make cool trophies. Have a local artisan make something local to the contest. These are cool and we decorate our house with them. There's a lot of cool stuff out there. Like this past year when Bill and Mary had the fire extinguishers. That's just an amazing, bad ass trophy that has meaning attached to the contest. I could write an entire essay about this.

MABA - How important are comment cards to you?

Luke - I read them, but take them with a grain of salt. If you're being honest about your turn ins with yourself, you can use the comment cards to justify your thoughts on the cook. That's a huge key to getting better.

MABA - Have you had aspiring master judges cook with you? How many? Was the experience positive for you and the judge?

Luke - We've had a bunch. It's fantastic to get that judge feedback immediately in your setup. It's a good tool for you as a cook, and good tool for judges to see what all goes into this fantastic hobby.

MABA - What advice would you give to a new judge?

Luke - Cook with a team first. Take the JCUP. See what goes into it. Talk to other judges. Network with teams. Also, NO COOLERS. Eat the meat that's given to you to judge. Take a big bite and experience what these world class pitmasters have put before you. Don't take anything home.

MABA - Thanks Luke! We appreciate your time. Best of luck through the remainder of the season.

If you are interested in telling your BBQ story, please let us know. We are looking for cook teams, organizers, contest representatives, and judges to participate. You are all important to the success of MABA and our barbecue contests. Send a quick message to maba@mabbqa.com. We will get back to you.

MABA ANNUAL MEETING AND BANQUET - SAVE THE DATE!

The MABA Board of Directors and the Banquet Committee are pleased to announce that the Annual Meeting and Banquet will take place on Saturday January 30th!

At this time, we are looking for venues across the region that would be suitable to host this event and we would love your help! Do you have a favorite location, a connection or an idea? We'd love to hear from you! Send us a message at maba@mabbqa.com.

Current Team of the Year Standings

as of September 30, 2026

MABA TOP 10

CONTEST: Team of the Year Division I

CATEGORY: OVERALL

1. B'S QUE
2. OLD VIRGINIA SMOKE
3. BOGGS HOG BBQ
4. SMOKIN HOGGZ BBQ
5. HOTMESS BBQ
6. 3 EYZ BBQ
7. SUSQUEHANNA SMOKERS
8. SMOKECRAFT
9. BEER TIME BBQ
10. AIN'T THAT RICH



MABA TOP 10

CONTEST: Team of the Year Division II

CATEGORY: OVERALL

1. CHUNKY BBQ
2. GLAZED AND INFUSED BBQ
3. THE FAT IS WHERE IT'S AT
4. TWISTED PAIR BBQ
5. BOWMANS BUTT & BBQ
6. DIG'N N PIG'N
7. POOR BOYS BBQ
8. BLUE EYED BBQ
9. SWEET BELLY'S BBQ
10. MISPELLION MEAT WORKS



MABA TOP 10

CONTEST: Backyard Team of the Year

CATEGORY: OVERALL

1. ROUGH CUT Q
2. FIRE & SHINE BBQ
3. PINKY OUT BBQ
4. LEANING JOWLER BBQ
5. BROCK'S BBQ
6. DOGPATCH Q
7. THE SWINE DOCTOR'S BBQ
8. HOT THANG BBQ
9. CLEAN SMOKE BBQ TEAM
10. MRC BARBECUE



You can see the full listing with
earned points for the
MABA Team of the Year
as well as the listing for
each category:

Chicken

Ribs

Pork

Brisket

on the MABA site at:

mabbqa.com



From the Editor: For our KCBS Judge Spotlight we are featuring Master Judge and MABA Board Member Bill DeHoff.

KCBS Judge – Bill DeHoff



Introduction: Bill discovered his passion for barbecue back in 2008, inspired by competition shows like BBQ Pitmasters. Taking his wife's advice, he decided to step off the sidelines and become a KCBS Certified Barbecue Judge.

Today, he is a Certified Master BBQ Judge who has judged 54 competitions and he has completed the KCBS JCUP program. When he isn't sitting at the judging table, you can find him firing up his Big Green Egg almost every weekend, relentlessly working to perfect his brisket cook.

MABA - When and how did you get started judging barbecue contests? How many contests have you judged? Are you a Master judge?

Bill - My BBQ judging started in 2013 with watching various shows on television. I had always enjoyed cooking on my gas grill, but the smoking of meat was different. I received my KCBS certification in 2014, Master's Judge in 2022 and have completed the JCUP certification with a total of 54 competitions judged to date.

MABA - Tell us about your first BBQ judging experience: what contest/where was it/ how did it go, etc.?

Bill - My first competition was The 2014 Giant National Barbeque Battle in Washington DC. As my first competition, I did not know what to expect. This competition was split into 2 days because of the location on Pennsylvania Ave. It was tough competition to get started with for distinct reasons, but it did start my journey.

MABA - What keeps you interested in judging?

Bill - The interaction with other judges, the teams, and the food itself.

MABA - What is your favorite category to judge and why?

Bill - Chicken. It is one of the meats that I cook on a weekly basis at home for my wife and me. I recently purchased a rotisserie that I use with my big green egg. It makes for a tasty meal.

MABA - What is your least favorite category to judge and why?

Bill - Pork (shoulder/butt). I just like the taste and texture of the three other proteins more.

MABA - Which contest is your favorite to judge and what makes it so great?

Bill - Smoke on the Rail. Contest is close to my house which allows for time to attend the awards ceremony and get back home at a reasonable time. It is also well organized.

MABA - What is one piece of advice you would give a new judge?

Bill - Be patient when registering and getting selected to judge competitions. When selected, enjoy the food as it is always worth the wait.

MABA - What advice would you give to a new or seasoned cook team based on your judging experience?

Bill - Enjoy the competition with your fellow cook teams. It is a family event.

MABA - If you are a Master judge, do you enjoy cooking with a team? What did you learn?

Bill - I have only cooked with 1 team, that being George DeMartz and Twisted Pair. I would really like to cook with more teams as my schedule allows.

MABA - What separates a good entry from a great entry?

Bill - It must be the taste.

MABA - What is your philosophy on comment cards? Do you fill them out for both high and low scoring entries?

Judge Spotlight: Bill DeHoff - Continued from page 12

Bill - Yes. Comment cards are extremely useful to both the cook teams and the judges. For the teams to provide both useful information on their entry and for the judge to think about what BBQ is.

MABA - What are your thoughts on the JCUP? Should judges be required to refresh their training?

Bill - I believe that JCUP is a useful tool for the judges. I believe that it should be required.

MABA - Is there any part of the judging experience that could be improved?

Bill - Possibly reduce the idle time at competitions. Currently it is 9:30 for judge's check-in and then waiting until 12:00 for the presentation of chicken. I do understand that it can be difficult to get the judges seated for distinct reasons, but the check-in could start at 10:00.

MABA -Thanks for taking the time to share with us, Bill.

MABA State Cup Winners - Q3



Old Virginia Smoke
won the MABA State Cup for
VA at the Stoney Creek BBQ
Cookoff in Edinburg, VA on
August 22, 2026.

Mispillion Meat Works
won the MABA State Cup for
DE at the First State BBQ
Bash in Milford, DE on
September 26, 2026.



Look for the next issue of the MABA Meat Sheet in December!