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## Bonehead's Texas BBQ Brings a Little Taste of Texas to the East Bay and Beyond

By A.K. Carroll



Cole slaw, tater salad, ribs and brisket  
Photos A.K. Carroll

Dave Roberson didn't set out to be a restaurant man. But when you look at his background in barbecue, it only makes sense that the man who built a smoker every time he upped and moved would end up using his well-honed skills to bring some good old Texas smokin' to the people of Northern California.

A native of Floydada, Texas and long-time resident of Moraga, Roberson's latest endeavor has been the opening of Bonehead's Texas BBQ, a counter-service establishment in Lafayette that serves as the brick and mortar home for his catering business. You can smell the sweet aroma of Roberson's wood-fired smokers before you even set foot in the door. Once you do, your mouth will start watering, whether you're hungry or not.

"I've always liked food," said Roberson. "My mom was just a phenomenal cook - no recipes, a smidgin here, a pinch there. I watched and learned to cook from her." Roberson started smoking meats in high school and continued into college, where his cooking went better than his studies (the man's always had a bit of a party in him). It was a church fundraiser that first got Roberson cooking for large

groups in the East Bay. One thing led to another and before he knew it he had left the world of tech and electronics to "go for broke" as a barbecue man.

The restaurant happened by accident. After eight years of catering out of a commissary kitchen in Concord, Roberson wanted his own commercial kitchen. He was looking for a space to build and ended up with an expanse off of Mt. Diablo Boulevard, complete with the framework for a storefront in what was once the home of Bo's Barbecue and Catering.

"I didn't want to do a restaurant," Roberson stated. "But I ended up signing a lease and then bought up a bunch of property." Six weeks in, business has been exceptional.

The most popular items from Bonehead's catering options have made it into the restaurant. The menu - displayed on a single large screen behind the register in the front - is streamlined and simple. There are five choices of meat (brisket, ribs, pulled pork, sausage and chicken), half a dozen sides and four combo options. It's "the Inn and Out of BBQ" as Roberson likes to say. In addition to iced tea and soda, two wines and four beer taps, including Texan favorite Shiner Bock, offer perfect pairings for a slow-smoked meal.

Bonehead's menu is based off of countless joints in Texas. The sides, which include a chef's salad, crisp cole slaw, mac 'n' cheese and cornbread with honey butter, are traditional and vegetarian friendly. The beans aren't quite on par with the batch my mama makes, but they're no can of Bush's either. All of the sides are made in-house, including a creamy lump of potato salad that's ready for a blue ribbon picnic.

Roberson's real prizes, though, are his meats. "We're one of the few companies that does brisket as it's traditionally done in Texas," he said. All of the meats at Bonehead's are dry-rubbed and slow-smoked. The beef is provided through Harris Ranch in Selma and the sausage comes from

Home Sausage Company in San Francisco. Roberson uses Mary's chicken thighs for his celebrated smoked chicken, which is alleged to have cured more than one vegetarian. "I brought 'em back down to their senses," Roberson likes to say.

The brisket is lean, a cut you won't find elsewhere because it's difficult to get lean meat to be tender. The secret at Bonehead's is a lot of time and a little bit of patience. All three of Roberson's smokers - including his newest, which was brought over from Texas - are continually slow-smoking meat, some of which stays in for a good 18 hours.

The service is quality and the staff is ready to serve. Meals at Bonehead's are nothing fancy, served on disposable plates and in plastic bowls, but they're nothing to turn your nose at either. Red Solo cups give a nod toward a barbecue party to go, whether you're dining indoors, outdoors, or taking it back home.

Now that he's officially a restaurateur, Roberson's going whole hog. He plans on doing some special events: pairing barbecue with beverages, hosting guest chefs, putting live music on the patio and bringing life to his new piece of property. In the future he may look into expanding, but for now his focus is closer to home, serving the people of Lamorinda. "It's a great community," said Roberson.

Bonehead's Texas BBQ

Address: 3422 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette

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Boneheads' Mac 'n' cheese, baked beans, pulled pork, beef sausage, and chicken

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