

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

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Where there's smoke there's barbecue

By Cathy Dausman



Dan Mazaika's barbecue rig can hold its own against shiny red firetrucks.

Photos Cathy Dausman

When Dan Mazaika comes on the scene he is often accompanied by smoke and fire. There is plenty of shiny red and chrome equipment too, but there may also be hot dogs, pork, chicken or

tri-tip.

Mazaika is a Moraga-Orinda Fire District engineer, as well as a welder and cook. He combined the latter talents to hand-craft one industrial-sized barbecue smoker oven on wheels, a

project Mazaika admits cost him three years in labor plus “blood, sweat, tears — and even a few beers.”

He says his barbecue is still very much a work in progress. The unit doesn't have a name yet although it

begs for one. From its heavy-duty four-wheeled trailer to its wood-burning fire box to the oven scratch-built from a repurposed air tank and OS&Y sprinkler valve handles to its big-rig twin chrome smoke stacks, it is a marvelous sight to behold. It is red and shiny enough to hold its own even amid commercial fire trucks.

And hold its own it does — the unit handles 100 pounds of meat at a time. “I did a whole pig for Super Bowl one year,” Mazaika said. Although he brings the smoker to work for his crew and coworkers to enjoy, Mazaika says, “It is my personal barbecue and it is kept at my house.”

The smoker was featured at a recent MOFD Open House in Orinda where Mazaika busily turned out barbecued hot dogs. Lunch proceeds were donated to the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

“My father taught me to weld, and I thought I could build one of these cool barbecues,” Mazaika said. After some research, he decided to build a smoker. “I did not have to make the barbecue as detailed as it is for it to be functional, but I wanted to give it some character,” he said. The red and chrome color scheme was almost a given considering his profession.

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