

Where there's smoke there's barbecue

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Mazaika also loved “the look of industrial stuff from the ‘30s and ‘40s. I wanted it to look like an old boiler that might have come out of a factory 80 years ago,” he said. The trailer was a surplus gift. “It was going to be for my backyard” Mazaika said until his friend gave him the trailer. To date the barbecue on wheels has traveled as far north as Red Bluff.

Just how did Mazaika get bitten by the barbecue bug? “A few years ago a



barbecue competition show was popular on the Food Network and I enjoyed watching the teams compete with their cool homemade barbecues,” Mazaika said. He perfected his cooking skills by assisting Martinez Sportsmen’s Club’s Danny Pellegrini. Although he says he is not a hard-core competitor Mazaika has entered the King of the County barbecue contest in Martinez a couple times.

The barbecue takes about an hour to reach 225 degrees, Mazaika’s preferred cooking temperature. “There are thermometers on the cook box and I stoke the fire about every 40 minutes,” he said. He even cooks for the employees at Bob’s Christmas Tree Lot in Moraga.

“In December the lot gets busy, so for one day I come down and barbecue for them, so they can enjoy a hot lunch of tri-tip and ribs,” Mazaika said.

When he’s not cooking, Mazaika works out of Orinda’s Fire Station 45. He’s been with MOFD for 19 years; he spent the first five years as a reserve officer. “I am a second-generation firefighter in the department,” he said. “My father, Steve Mazaika, started as one of the original Moraga Volunteers Firefighters.”

Mazaika has no plans to cook for a living. “I get many offers to be hired, but I just cook for friends and family. I don’t want this to become a side business (because) then it becomes more work than fun. I don’t want that. I built it to have fun.”

Understanding barbecue — and building them

If this article has left you bitten by the barbecue bug, first bone up on the regional definitions of slow-smoked meat.

Cooking styles differ from city or region of origin, from Kansas City, Kansas, to Memphis, Tennessee, Lexington, Kentucky, North Carolina and Texas. Sauces, marinades, dry rubs, choice of meat and the very wood itself (pellets or logs? Cherry, apple, pecan, alder, oak, hickory or mesquite?) all impart delicious but distinctive tastes to your entrée.

Then flip over to the Kansas City Barbecue Society website (www.kcbs.us/index.php) for in-depth information on the subject. This nonprofit organization boasts over 20,000 members and sanctions more than 500 barbecue contests worldwide, including the upcoming Silicon Valley BBQ Championship at Santa Clara Central Park, June 23-24 (www.kcbs.us/event/6877/silicon-valley-bbq-championship).

For those stoked to build their own smoker out of wood, metal, cinder block, brick clay pots, or cardboard, Lamorinda Weekly has smoked out a few... ahem... choice websites to get you started:

- <http://cooldiyideas.com/diy-meat-smokers/>
- www.popularmechanics.com/home/food-drink/how-to/a778/3372796/
- http://amazingribs.com/links/build_your_own_bbq_smoker_grill.html
- www.instructables.com/id/How-to-Build-a-Smoker/

With summer just days away, if you really can’t wait, ready-made units abound:

- www.thespruce.com/how-to-buy-a-food-smoker-331659

— Cathy Dausman

