



Rockin' Ronnie's

Barbecue Times

News and views from Canada's barbecue champion



Volume I, Issue #1, September 2004

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Welcome!

Woo hoo! Welcome to the first edition of ***Rockin' Ronnie's Barbecue Times***, an e-letter devoted to improving the quality of your barbecue lifestyle.

If you received this e-mail, you have either agreed to be on my private e-mail list or you are a friend or business contact who is already in my personal address book. Either way, if you want out, just send an e-mail to listmanager@ronshewchuk.com and I'll let you off the hook. I apologize if you received this in error.

For those who plan to stick around.... screw your wig on tight! It's going to be a tasty ride. I hope to deliver an interesting, breezy, informative read, full of news, anecdotes, tips, tricks and recipes. I want this to be an interactive newsletter, so please write me with your comments, share your favorite recipes and barbecue tips, pass on a great story, or ask me just about anything.

Rib Tickler

“In preparation for her prison term, Martha Stewart recently had to endure a cavity search. She turned out to be full of cornbread stuffing with roasted pecans.”

- Kate Zimmerman, columnist and freelance journalist (and my loving wife)

Ronnie's Barbecue BLOG

What a year it's been! Since the barbecue season began last September, Rockin' Ronnie's Butt Shredders have competed in a record six barbecue contests and taken the Grand Champion title home twice – for Calgary's Barbecue on the Bow last Labour Day weekend, and the Canadian National Barbecue Championships in Whistler, B.C. on August 1.

Now, with the regular season over, it's time for the playoffs. We're gearing up to compete in two of the best season-ending contests.

“Sing me now, oh sing me Montego Bay....”

On September 19th I'll be joined by fellow Butt Shredder Vince Gogolek in beautiful Montego Bay to represent Canada at the third annual International Jerk-style/Southern Barbecue Cook-off. The trip to Jamaica was the grand prize for our victory at the Canadians and is courtesy of contest sponsor Appleton Rum.

Vince and I will be cooking in all categories: pork roast, pork ribs, chicken, fish (whole snapper), sauce and desert. The contest is being run by barbecue legend Rocky Danner, publisher of the *National Barbecue News*, and it's in its third year. Rocky has a bold vision: to invite barbecue teams from all over the world to compete in the West Indies, the place where barbecue was born, in a competition that provides entrants with the ultimate level playing field.



Each team gets issued the same meat, and we will all cook on identical Jamaican drum-style cookers with the same local charcoal. All we bring is our rubs, sauces, hardwood chips and barbecue tools – and may the best Q win! Last year's champion was the ubiquitous Big Bob Gibson from Decatur, Alabama, and a local Jamaican team came second.

Let's hope Hurricane Ivan doesn't have a taste for barbecue and spares Jamaica on his way north! (Thanks to Rocky Danner for the photo!)

Back to the Jack!

On Oct. 23 we'll switch from Jamaican rum to Tennessee Sipping Whiskey as we head down to Lynchburg for the *ne plus ultra* of barbecue contests, the Jack Daniel's World Championship Invitational Barbecue, now in its 16th year. We'll have a full complement of team members at the Jack, including Kathy Richardier, Amo Jackson, Dave Thurgar, Ian Baird and Sharma Christie from Calgary and Vince and I from the West Coast.



We're going to be loaded for bear, hoping to beat our performance last year, when we competed at the Jack for the first time and took home a very respectable second place trophy in the pork shoulder category. Check out my pal Rick McCharles' Web site devoted to [pictures of the Butt Shredders](#), including some great photos by Ian Baird and Peter Findlay.

Workshops Indoctrinate a New Generation of Barbecue Fanatics

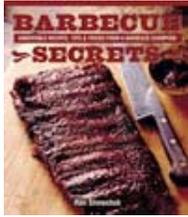
My fellow Butt Shredders and I have been putting on a successful all-day barbecue workshop in Calgary for many years and it sells out months in advance. For me one of the big highlights of this year was bringing the spirit of barbecue to the West Coast, where I hosted my first all-day Secrets of Championship Barbecue Workshop at Dusty's Bar & BBQ.

The workshop was held on Saturday, July 3, followed by a half-day grilling class the following day. The two events drew 30 participants and the weather was perfect.



Many thanks to Vince Goglek, Bob Haselbach, Martin Blais and Bryan O'Connor for helping put on the event, and special thanks to Paul Street of Whistler Blackcomb for generously offering Dusty's as the venue for the events. Check out a photo gallery of highlights from the workshop and grilling class at www.ronshechuk.com/bbg/photos/whistlerworkshop.htm. Thanks very much to Bryan O'Connor for the photos!

Barbecue Secrets: The Adventure of a Lifetime



When Whitecap Books of North Vancouver approached me last year with the idea of doing a barbecue cookbook I was flattered and scared at the same time. It had been a longtime dream of mine, but now I was being given an opportunity to make it happen. Putting together a book is a huge amount of work, and I couldn't imagine how I would meet the deadline and produce a manuscript. But with the help of the great team at Whitecap and incredible support from friends and family who contributed recipes and constructive feedback, *Barbecue Secrets* was born, with a launch party in Calgary at the end of May. Since then it's been a crazy summer for me as I embarked on a book promotion tour, with cooking demonstrations, book signings, cooking classes and media interviews in Calgary, Vancouver and Toronto – not to mention competing in all those barbecue contests, including two in the U.S!

My wife Kate jokingly calls herself a barbecue widow, but this summer it was really true. Barbecue has taken over my life. I've gained ten pounds, my knees are shot from kneeling to check the meat in my cookers and my farts smell like hickory smoke. But the book is selling like hotcakes and the response from readers and reviewers has been tremendous. I must say, though, I will be relieved when the season is over and I can get back to my communications consulting practice and paying attention to my family. Speaking of which, I'd better finish this Barbecue BLOG entry and get vacuuming!

Till next time, happy cooking!

Rockin' Ronnie



Recipe of the Month

The Canadian National Barbecue Championships features the traditional four barbecue categories, but the day before the main event there's an appetizer and backyard burger contest. This year for our appetizer entry, my team mate Tom Masterson and I, with assistance from my old pal from Chicago Steve Crescenzo, cooked Rack of Lamb With Balsamic Reduction from my book, *Barbecue Secrets*.

Preparing the lamb for turn-in to the judges was one of the most exciting times I've ever had in championship barbecue. With about five minutes till the deadline we checked the three lamb racks in our little Weber Smoky Joe portable charcoal

grill, and discovered that they were way undercooked, registering about 100 degrees Fahrenheit – about 30 degrees less than perfectly done. There was no time to lose. In a panicked frenzy, we took the racks off the grill and I cut them into chops, quickly putting them back on the grill in hopes they would sear to a proper doneness.

Less than a minute per side was all we could afford – we were lucky the Namibian charcoal we were using was nice and hot. We composed the final presentation about one minute before the deadline, laying the little chops on a bed of fragrant fresh mint surrounded by lemon slices. A quick drizzle with balsamic reduction and we were off and literally running to the judging area, where we got our entry in just under the wire. The chops were perfectly done, the judges loved it, and we got a blue ribbon, winning the category!

Rack of Lamb With Balsamic Reduction

This is a delicious way to grill lamb racks. The balsamic reduction has an incredible sweet tanginess that offsets the earthiness of the dried herbs and brings out the flavor of the meat. Serve as is as an appetizer or with some of your favorite rice and a tossed green salad.



- 4 racks of lamb, Frenched by your butcher (trimmed to bare the ribs and remove the silverskin)
- kosher salt
- juice of one lemon
- 1/2 cup/125 mL extra virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbsp./25 mL Dijon mustard
- 1 Tbsp./15 mL chopped fresh rosemary leaves
- 1/2 tsp./2 mL freshly ground pepper
- 2 cloves garlic, smashed or pushed through a garlic press
- 1 cup/250 mL balsamic vinegar
- 2 Tbsp./25 mL Dijon mustard
- 1 Tbsp./15 mL granulated garlic
- 1 Tbsp./15 mL granulated onion
- 1/2 tsp./2 mL cayenne
- Mediterranean Dried Herb Rub
 - 1 Tbsp./15 mL dried (*not* powdered) oregano
 - 1 Tbsp./15 mL dried mint
 - 1 Tbsp./15 mL dried basil
 - 1 Tbsp./15 mL dried rosemary
 - 1 tsp./5 mL dried parsley
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- sprigs of fresh mint for garnish

One to two hours before you are going to cook the lamb racks, lightly season the lamb with salt. Combine the lemon juice, oil, 2 Tbsp./25 mL mustard, rosemary, pepper and garlic in a non-reactive baking dish or resealable plastic bag. Put in the racks, turning them once or twice in to ensure they are evenly exposed to the marinade.

While the lamb is marinating, pour the balsamic vinegar in a small saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cook, watching carefully, until the vinegar has reduced to about 1/2 its original volume (about 10-15 minutes). It should be a thick syrup that coats the back of a spoon. Set aside to cool.

Prepare your grill for medium direct heat. Take the lamb out of the marinade, pat the racks dry with paper towel and brush them with a fresh coat of Dijon mustard. Combine the garlic, onion and cayenne and sprinkle lightly over the lamb racks. Coat the racks generously with the herb rub, patting it in with your hands so it sticks to the meat. Drizzle a little olive oil over the rubbed racks and pat it into the rub.

Using cherry wood chips as a flavoring agent, grill the racks for about 4-5 minutes per side, or until the internal temperature at the thickest point is about 135 - 140°F. To serve, cut the racks into individual chops, arrange on plates and drizzle with the balsamic reduction. Garnish with sprigs of fresh mint.

Serves 4 as a main course, 8 as an appetizer.

Do you have a favorite barbecue recipe you'd like to share? Send it on to me at rockinronnie@ronshewchuk.com.

Ask Rockin'

Mike from Quesnel asks, Did I buy the right water smoker?

Hello Ron:

First of all, I loved your book. Made me go out and buy the first water smoker I saw, unfortunately. We live up in Quesnel and there weren't a whole lot of choices. I kind of knew I was in trouble when you talked about the "warm, ideal, hot" temperature gauge that came with mine. That has been changed out.

So my question is, the bottom of my smoker is open and the bottom of the coal tray just hangs down into the open air. The picture of the one I saw in your book looks sealed with only an air vent down there.

Am I going to be able to control the amount of air getting to the coals on mine and will it be successful in doing a pork roast properly? Or would it be easier to go find a better one somewhere else?

We are heading down to Van this weekend so I might start looking around if need be. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks in advance

Mike Legere
Quesnel BC

Dear Mike:

Thanks for your note and I'm delighted you are enjoying my book.

As for your smoker, the answer to your question is no, you can't control the airflow in that style of smoker, but, yes, you can produce very good barbecue, particularly with a resilient cut like pork butt. The key is to keep that water pan filled and the coals tended so the chamber temperature stays in the 200-225 degree range. But with a pork butt, it won't be harmed if the temperature gets a little higher than that.

If you want a better smoker, look for a Weber Smokey Mountain Cooker, which should be available at most barbecue specialty stores. In the Vancouver area you can get them at Johnstone's BBQ Parts on Pemberton in North Vancouver and at Kerrisdale Hardware in Vancouver. They cost about CDN\$270 but they're well worth the investment.

Happy Cooking,

Rockin' Ronnie

Grant from Calgary asks, Where can I get granulated garlic and onion?

Dear Rockin':

I have purchased *Barbecue Secrets* and enjoy it immensely. However, I have looked in the grocery chains and cannot find either granulated onions or granulated garlic. Would powdered onion and powdered garlic be the same as granulated in each case? Or do I need to go some sort of speciality shop?

Thanks for any help.

Grant Natland

Dear Grant:

Several others have written me about the granulation issue, and I apologize that you are having trouble finding those ingredients. The short answer is, yes, onion and garlic powder will do — and, in fact, several companies are selling granulated onion and garlic and calling them powders. What you want to look for is for the product to have the consistency of fine sand rather than really fine powder. I have found that the fine powders impart a bitter, slightly acrid taste.

As for actual labeled products, I buy McCormick's or Club House brand garlic granules at my local supermarket (Save On Foods), and it comes in one of those big 700g containers. (I've noticed that their so-called garlic powder also looks like granulated garlic to me.)

Granulated onion, on the other hand, is harder to find. Morton & Bassett, the high-end spice company, sells granulated onion and it's at Safeway and other supermarkets in the 'high-end' spice section, but it's very expensive. But if you look in the ethnic section of stores, or go to a middle-eastern grocery, you should be able to find granulated onion either in a container or in a cello bag. But, as mentioned above, just look for onion powder, and if it looks sandy rather than powdery, that's what you want.

Cheers,

Rockin' Ronnie

Do you have a question or comment? Ask me at rockinronnie@ronshewchuk.com and I'll feature a selection of letters in future issues of *Barbecue Times*.

Rockin' Ronnie Watch

Sept. 11: A VISIT TO GOURMET WAREHOUSE

On **Saturday, Sept. 11 from noon to 2.00 p.m.** I'll have the pleasure of returning to one of my favorite foodie haunts, **Vancouver's Gourmet Warehouse**, where I'll be cooking up some fabulous gourmet quesadillas and signing copies of my book, ***Barbecue Secrets: Recipes, Tips & Tricks from a Barbecue Champion***. If you were thinking of getting a copy of the book as a Christmas gift for your favorite backyard cook, this is a great opportunity to have it personally inscribed by yours truly. I'll also be showing off the humungous trophy my team, Rockin' Ronnie's Butt Shredders, took home when we won the Canadian National Barbecue Championships in Whistler on the August long weekend. (We don't get to keep the trophy, so I'm touring it around like the Stanley Cup!)

Sept. 19: JAMAICA OR BUST!

The grand prize of the Canadian Championship was a trip for two to the white sands of **Montego Bay, Jamaica** to represent Canada on **Sept. 19 in the International Jerk-style/Southern Barbecue Cookoff at the Sunset Beach Resort & Spa**. The trip is courtesy of Canadian contest sponsor Appleton Rum.

Oct. 16 & 17: GRILLING CLASSES AT CALGARY'S COOKBOOK COMPANY

Even though I live in beautiful North Vancouver, a part of me will always consider **Calgary** home. I'm back the **weekend of Oct. 16** to deliver two grilling classes at **The Cookbook Company Cooks**, the headquarters of Calgary's doyenne of dining, **Gail Norton**. Gail has a great cooking school in the basement of her store on 11th Ave. On Saturday afternoon it's High Steaks Cooking, where I'll cook a selection of my favorite steaks, and Sunday it's Grilling Secrets, an overview of the grilling recipes and techniques from Barbecue Secrets. For more info and exact times visit <http://www.cookbookcooks.com/html/home.php> or call the Cookbook Company Cooks at 1-800-663-8532. Register soon -- Gail's classes fill up fast!

Oct. 23: JACK DANIEL'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP INVITATIONAL

Winning the two big Canadian contests this season earned us an invitation to the worlds most prestigious barbecue competition, **The Jack Daniel's World Championship Invitational Barbecue**. Held on the hallowed grounds of the famous distillery in **Lynchburg, Tennessee** on the **third Saturday of October**, the contest includes state and regional champions from across the U.S. as well as top teams many other countries, including Germany, Switzerland, Jamaica and Canada.

Coming Up in the Next Edition of Rockin' Ronnie's Barbecue Times

- The Big Smoke: Full reports on the Butt Shredders' experience at the big contests in Jamaica and Tennessee.
- Answers to more barbecue questions.
- Another great recipe or two.

Rockin' Ronnie's Barbecue Times is published four or five times a year. To get on or off the mailing list, just drop me a line to listmanager@ronshewchuk.com.

For more about Ron Shewchuk (including more recipes and a photo gallery), visit www.ronshewchuk.com
