

**LOCAL
FORECAST**



85 75

Can you
hear the
thunder
roll?

Details,
14-B



NATIONAL

Weight grade

Arkansas schools see effects
of sending home fitness scores

6-A

SPORTS

Pitch perfect

Seahawks' Patrick Lawson
leads all-area baseball team

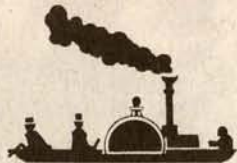
1-B



**QUOTE OF
THE DAY**

"We do
so much
need the
help of
friends and
the confi-
dence of
their hel-
in need.

- Epicurus



THE ISLAND
PACKET

Volume 36
Founded 1970

25¢

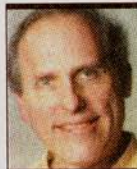
Northern influx may dilute barbecue blood

Barbecue shouldn't be a war. It's more serious than that.

But here in the Lowcountry, the passion for barbecue might be getting watered down as our population grows.

Newcomers might not even know about the battle between mustard sauce and ketchup sauce that divides our state geographically, philosophically, even spiritually. They might have never savored the endless spat in North Carolina pitting Lexington barbecue against the vinegary pig pickin's Down East.

They might not even know the difference



David Lauderdale

Blog
www.islandpacket.com



E-mail
dlauderdale@islandpacket.com

Call
706-8115

between pig parts or parts of speech. They might mistakenly think barbecue is a verb, as in something one would do to a kielbasa.

Please see **BARBECUE**, Page 13-A



David Lauderdale/The Island Packet

Kitchen manager Brandon Stewart checks the Boston butts, ribs and chicken in one of two hickory-wood-fueled Southern Pride smokers at Jim 'N Nick's Bar-B-Q in Bluffton.

Barbecue

Continued from Page 1-A

But as the award-winning documentary about barbecue in the Carolinas put it so elegantly: "Barbecue Is a Noun." It's pork. It is a hefty slab of meat cooked slowly over coals as the good Lord intended.

I'm not claiming to be an expert on pig cooking. I am the one who once lovingly turned a large shoulder over charcoal coals all afternoon, only to then discover it was a smoked picnic. It was cooked to begin with, and tender as an anvil.

Nevertheless, my neighbor Jim and I have always said we'll cook a whole hog in the backyard the day all our children get their own addresses and their own visible means of support. So far, the pigs have nothing to worry about.

But I know good barbecue when I taste it. And I haven't joined the Sissy Club and put a honking gas grill on the deck. For all the flavor you get from those things, you might as well buy a Magic Marker

and draw grill marks on your food. It would be a lot cheaper and might even taste better.

No, they'll have to pry my Weber grill out of my cold, dead hands. But I'll admit to lusting after a Big Green Egg grill.

And I know that the best barbecue on the planet comes from right here in the Lowcountry — at Sweatman's Bar-b-que in Orangeburg County. All night long, whole hogs sizzle in a sweet haze over wood coals in the pits out back. It's open weekends only, in the fields between the towns of Eutawville and Holly Hill, but don't bother calling. Last time I checked, the descendants of founders Bub and Marge Sweatman are doing just fine without a telephone.

As a matter of fact, Sweatman's is the only absolute in barbecue. It is the absolute best.

But barbecue is like a homemade biscuit. It's hard to mess it up. Some barbecue is better than others, but it's all good.

That's why I think South Carolina needs to join with Jim Early, a barbecue guru in Winston-Salem, N.C. Early — a lawyer, gourmet chef, international fisherman and hunting guide, and stress-management teacher — drove more than 25,000 miles and devoted more than 3,000 hours to sample barbecue in 228 'cue joints in all 100 North Carolina counties. He critiques 140 of them in his definitive book, "The Best Tar Heel Barbecue, Manteo to Murphy."

Now he has organized the North Carolina Barbecue Society to celebrate and preserve the culture of barbecue. The society is not about staging or judging cooking competitions, though Early is a veteran at that on the national scene.

"Barbecue is still the comfort food of choice in most of the country," he told me. "It is an attitude. It is a celebration. It is a feeling, like the Sunday afternoons spent with my mother's family, the Hickses, where the adults sat around the dinner

table and laughed and talked and the children were to be seen but not heard. It's color blind. All my life, I've seen people set aside differences and sit down together to enjoy a pig, Brunswick stew cooked in big iron pots, sliced watermelon and a churn of ice cream."

The society will:

- Offer classes to train a cadre of teachers to educate school children and others on the impact of hogs on the agriculture, economy and culture of the state.

- Establish a Barbecue Trail, mapping out 25 stops statewide where pitmasters still go to the time and expense of cooking the old and dying way — over wood.

- Establish a Barbecue Hall of Fame to honor those who have made significant contributions to enhance or promote barbecue or sauces.

- Encourage more documentaries to record for posterity the characters and stories surrounding barbecue pits.

- Start two more barbecue festivals, including a big one at the state fairgrounds in the state capital, and one on the Outer Banks called "The Lost Barbecue." Early says the first Thanksgiving had nothing to do with Pilgrims but was a pig pickin' on the Outer Banks.

"We can't prove it," he said, "but until someone can disprove it, we're claiming it."

And he hopes the new society can douse the flames of the barbecue wars.

"I don't want people to get heart-attack serious about this," he said. "It's not an end-all, be-all. It's not even in the top 10 in God's plan. It's barbecue. It's fun. It's laughter. It's good times."

In other words, it's something worth fighting for — or at least honoring and preserving, right here in the Lowcountry.

ON THE WEB

www.jimearly.com

www.scarbeque.com