

Where to find the best BBQ in the US across four regional styles

See who smoked the competition

**10
BEST** By 10BEST Editors

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Barbecue is woven into the fabric of American food culture, with different regions bringing their own flavors, techniques, and traditions to the table. From smoky Texas brisket to tangy Carolina pulled pork, the country's best barbecue reflects a rich sense of place and pride.

The USA TODAY 10BEST Readers' Choice Awards fired up the competition to honor the top contenders across four regions: Carolina-style BBQ, Kansas City-style BBQ, Memphis-style BBQ, and Texas-style BBQ. After four weeks of voting, the results are in — and the nation's favorite barbecue styles have earned their bragging rights.

Click on each category below to see the full winners list:

Best Carolina-Style BBQ: The Pit Authentic Barbecue in Raleigh, North Carolina



Stop in for whole-hog BBQ at The Pit Authentic Barbecue – Photo courtesy of Scott Montgomery

Whole-hog barbecue is the main event at [The Pit](#), a Raleigh favorite housed inside a restored 1930s-era warehouse. In addition to pork, the venue offers a diverse range of other proteins including beef brisket, chopped barbecue turkey, and Southern fried chicken — and there are even barbecue soy nuggets for the meat-averse.

[Full list of winners: Best Carolina-Style BBQ »](#)

Best Kansas City-Style BBQ: Slap's BBQ in Kansas City, Kansas



Patrons of award-winning Slap's BBQ might say 'it slaps' – Photo courtesy of RyanJLane / E+

Brothers Mike and Joe Pearce started competing in BBQ contests and winning, so it didn't take long for these two local Kansans to decide to start their own BBQ joint in Kansas City. They opened [Slap's BBQ](#) on Central Avenue in 2014 (after an appearance on the TV show "BBQ Pitmasters") and sold out every day for close to four years.

Using hickory and oak to create a slow smoke, they cook ribs, beef brisket, pork butts, turkey, sausage, and burnt ends. They're open seven days a week and still find time for competitive BBQing.

[Full list of winners: Best Kansas City-Style BBQ »](#)

Best Memphis-Style BBQ: Marlowe's Ribs & Restaurant in Memphis, Tennessee



Arrive in style by way of a pink limo to Marlowe's Ribs & Restaurant – Photo courtesy of Marlowe's Ribs and Restaurant

A favorite for Elvis fans, [Marlowe's Ribs & Restaurant](#) boasts all sorts of vintage paraphernalia pertaining to The King and a menu loaded with classic BBQ favorites. Since 1974, this spot has been serving up hearty pork ribs and beef brisket, and they even operate a fleet of pink limousines to ferry diners to and from nearby hotels.

Full list of winners: Best Memphis-Style BBQ »

Best Texas-Style BBQ: Jay's BBQ Shack in Abilene, Texas



Load up with a sampler of plate of BBQ at Jay's BBQ Shack – Photo courtesy of Jay Stearns

A no-frills Abilene favorite, Jay's BBQ Shack offers a wide range of classic Texas barbecue plates, sandwiches, and tacos. Pulled pork, brisket, and sausage links are all available by the half pound, while adventurous eaters can spring for a signature sandwich, with options ranging from the turkey-loaded Jaybird to the Boss Hog, a decadent dish that comes loaded with pulled pork, sausage, and slaw.

Full list of winners: Best Texas-Style BBQ »

Congratulations to all these winners! Remember to visit 10best.usatoday.com daily to vote in more Readers' Choice Awards.

Eat like a local at these 10 standout Carolina-style BBQ spots

Where to find the best of this regional style



Best Carolina-Style BBQ (2026)

Oct. 28, 2026

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Low and slow: that's the Carolina way. Renowned for its tender, hardwood-smoked pork and tangy vinegar, ketchup, or mustard-based sauces, Carolina-style barbecue is a regional treasure that's rightly earned fans all over the country.

These 10 independently-owned restaurants — nominated by an expert panel and voted by readers as the best in the U.S. — proudly serve up authentic, exceptional Carolina-style barbecue. From menu items like pulled pork and ribs to hush puppies and banana pudding, each spot pairs smoky meats with classic Southern sides in a welcoming, laid-back setting that invites you to stay awhile.



No. 1: The Pit Authentic Barbecue →

Raleigh, North Carolina

Whole-hog barbecue is the main event at The Pit, a Raleigh favorite housed inside a restored 1930s-era warehouse. In addition to pork, the venue offers a diverse range of other proteins including beef brisket, chopped barbecue turkey, and Southern fried chicken — and there are even barbecue soy nuggets for the meat-averse.



Photo courtesy of McNeely Photography

No. 2: Red Bridges Barbecue Lodge



Shelby, North Carolina

Red Bridges and his wife Lyttle started making BBQ in 1946 in Shelby, North Carolina, following the Western/Lexington style of slow-cooking pork shoulders over hickory wood smoke, chopping it up, slathering on a vinegar-based sauce, and adding BBQ slaw to the platter. Red Bridges Barbecue Lodge hasn't changed much over the years. And with Lyttle Bridges being posthumously inducted into the Barbecue Hall of Fame with a Legacy Award in 2021, it seems this third-generation family business is still doing everything right. So grab a glass of sweet tea and pull up a chair, for when you've made it to Red Bridges, you've gotten serious about your BBQ.



Photo courtesy of Threshold Media

No. 3: Carolina Brothers BBQ



Ashburn, Virginia

When North Carolina transplant Danny Hurdle opened his Eastern Carolina-style BBQ joint in the D.C. suburbs in Virginia, it was an immediate hit. Nowadays, the Gorey family carries on his traditions in the same spot, with the slow cooker right in front of the eatery, which resembles a classic country house — front porch and all. They smoke up pork (ribs and pulled pork), beef (including brisket), and chicken to eat in or carry out, and if you're having a big shindig — big or small, Carolina Brothers loves to cater!



Photo courtesy of Baxter Miller

No. 4: Sam Jones BBQ



Winterville, North Carolina

Sam Jones BBQ started in 2015, with Jones following the footsteps of his grandfather Pete Jones, whose Skylight Inn BBQ joint (opened in 1947) took home a James Beard Award as an American Classic in 2003. Sam branched out to chop his own path as the owner and pitmaster of Sam Jones BBQ. He's still doing it traditionally, by slow-smoking a whole hog over an oak fire and serving it with cornbread. Plus, he smokes chicken and turkey, and serves catfish, too. Jones has another outpost in Raleigh as he builds his own family BBQ legend.



Photo courtesy of Jeremy Poland / E+

No. 5: B's Barbeque →

Greenville, North Carolina

The McLawhorn family has been making Carolina-style pork and chicken BBQ in this unassuming Greenville eatery since 1978, and nothing has changed over the years. There's no phone, definitely no website: just word of mouth and the address on B's Barbeque Road on the northwest edge of Greenville. Smoked overnight, the BBQ here is Carolina Eastern-style, slow-cooked and served with a vinegar-based sauce and coleslaw. They smoke whole hogs and lots of chickens, and open at 9 a.m. Tuesday through Saturday for takeout only. Lines form, and when everything is gone (or 2:30 p.m. comes around), they close up shop.



Photo courtesy of Baxter Miller

No. 6: Skylight Inn BBQ →

Ayden, North Carolina

Just south of Greenville in Ayden, North Carolina, is the BBQ spot that everyone knows about. That's because Skylight Inn BBQ has been smoking whole hogs since 1947, when teenager Pete Jones opened his Eastern-style Carolina BBQ restaurant. In 1982, even President Reagan enjoyed it all the way in Washington, D.C. With a James Beard Award and a loyal following, Pete's family have kept up the tradition at the cash-only eatery, serving chopped "Pig" sandwiches or platters, with tangy vinegar sauce and world-famous cornbread. They've got smoked "Yard Bird" (chicken) as well and a few simple sides, with all the goodness available Monday to Saturday.



Photo courtesy of Carmen K Sisson / iStock Via Getty Images Plus

No. 7: Camel City BBQ Factory →

Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Just north of downtown Winston-Salem, Camel City BBQ Factory draws diners with their decadent factory sandwiches and factory plates piled high with smoked meat. The 10-hour smoked Carolina pulled pork is a certified fan favorite, while additional options span from brisket sandwiches to smoked sausage to pulled hickory chicken.



Photo courtesy of GMVozd / E+

No. 9: Lexington Barbecue



Lexington, North Carolina

The Monk family has been making Western-style Carolina BBQ since 1962, following the Western Carolina style of using only pork shoulders and creating a sweet sauce that combines ketchup and vinegar. They sell that sauce by the bottle, as well as a hot and spicy version, too. Their BBQ can be chopped, coarse chopped, or sliced, depending on your preference; it is all cooked over oak in brick pits. They also smoke turkeys here and sides are traditional, with coleslaw, baked BBQ beans, hush puppies, and french fries on the plate. Don't miss their pies and peach cobbler for dessert.



Photo courtesy of Elena Chelysheva / iStock Via Getty Images Plus

No. 10: Doc's Barbeque and Southern Buffet



Columbia, South Carolina

Doc's Barbeque and Southern Buffet offers a wide range of tried-and-true Southern classics, with plenty of hearty barbecue dishes to sample during a visit. Meat lovers can spring for a traditional BBQ or sliced brisket sandwich, while the marinated catfish nuggets are a top choice for seafood fans.