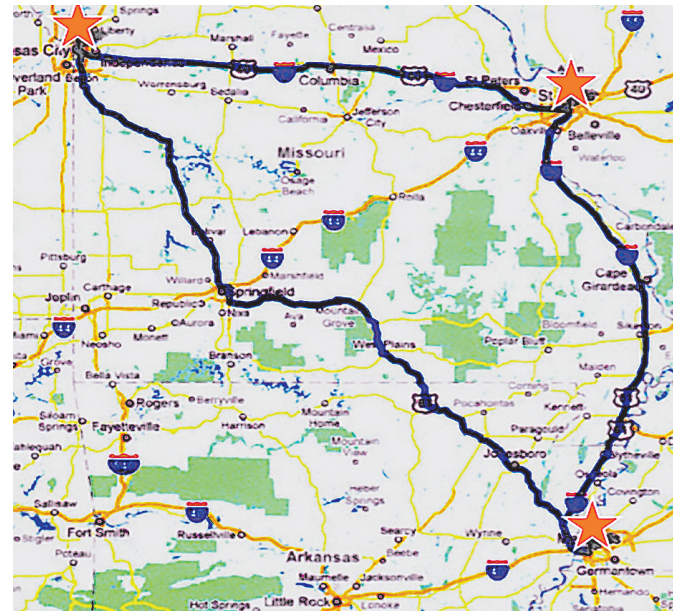


# The Mysterious BBQ Triangle



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The points of this triangular shape include Kansas City to the West, St. Louis in the middle and Memphis to the South. It provides what one might call The Barbecue Triangle.

John Stewart is a lifelong barbecue aficionado who has traveled the nation sampling and writing about the best barbecue in the U.S. John's website, [www.barbecuestlouis.com](http://www.barbecuestlouis.com), highlights not only the rich history of St. Louis BBQ but also provides the latest reviews, tips and trends that make the art of barbecue truly America's pastime.

The area between Florida, Bermuda and Puerto Rico is known for the disappearance of aircraft and ships in a manner that cannot be explained by piracy, human error, equipment failure or natural disasters. While not as ominous or dangerous, the Midwest has its own geographical three corners connected by the best barbecue in the world.

St. Louis forms the apex of this triangle and deservedly so. The historical contributions of the Gateway City to the world of Barbecue are simply unparalleled. It begins with the pork spare rib, the most desired and most famous of all St. Louis Barbecue. Most barbecue restaurants across the nation will have the St. Louis Style Spare Rib on their menu. It is the most asked for rib in the United States.

These ribs are distinguished by how the rack is trimmed. In preparation the brisket bones are removed from the bottom of the rack leaving two outstanding products, the rib tips and center rectangular rack portion.

The origins of the St. Louis Style Cut, like the Bermuda Triangle, are quite a mystery. Many accounts trace it back to the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. The make-up of the local ethnic community may have also influenced this special cut.

Rib tips became popular in the early 1900s and price played a role. The popularity of the tip grew so much that butchers began marketing the two cuts separately. Trimming the spare rib provides other cooking benefits such as fitting the rib rack more evenly on the grill with other slabs of ribs.

In addition to this special cut, St. Louis stands-out with its diversity of barbecue cooking styles. This is once again influenced by the many ethnic neighborhoods found throughout the community. Not all regions can boast about their old-world barbecue recipes.

This includes those who favor slow cooked delights on low heat or those who enjoy high-temperature grilling with panned meat simmering for hours in sweet barbecue sauce, or a combination of both.

Another local tradition is the St. Louis Style barbecue pork steak. Only found in this region pork steaks are cut from the Boston Butt, usually in one-inch thick steaks and trimmed of excess fat.

Other cities may have their pulled pork sandwiches but only in St. Louis can you find the butt cut up into steaks and barbecued. The pork steaks are usually cooked in one of two ways. One method is to simmer the steak in sauce. This involves slow open grilling until done, then simmer-

ing the steaks in a pan of barbecue sauce on the back of the grill. Beer is often added to keep the sauce from becoming too thick. The finished product is a pork steak that can literally be cut with a fork. This method is what Dave Glover, host of the Dave Glover radio show in St. Louis, describes as a "lazy man's method" of barbecuing.

It doesn't take much skill but most of the cooking and simmering is done while one sits in the shade of their backyard in some 120% local humidity. One "simmers" along with their pork steaks, sipping on a cold Falstaff or Budweiser.

High-heat cooking is also another time honored local tradition. The pork steaks are placed on high heat then placed off to the side indirectly from the charcoal. Smoking continues in temperatures around 200 to 225 degrees for approximately 2.5 to three hours.

But what is surely missing from other Triangle towns are the ethnic communities and cherished traditions of backyard barbecues which make St. Louis so unique.

Tradition and innovation is what placed St. Louis on the apex of The Barbecue Triangle and we are blessed to enjoy great and diverse barbecue in any of the three regions.

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