



NBBQA National Conference Just Happened

When we arrived in Kansas City for the NBBQA's National Conference I was ready for a jammed packed event full of relationships, education and some culinary focused fun. I wasn't disappointed, but I was sad that it seemed to just fly by. Days passed quickly - From the Keynotes, to the happy hours, to the contests, to the meals. Everything was just as I had hoped it would be and so much more. First time attendees Jake & Aimee Slama of Jake & Aimee's Sauces shared, "An eye opening experience I was not expecting. From awesome people, to amazing information, I'm hooked and looking forward to working more with the NBBQA!"

This is exactly what it was like for me the first time I attended, and as the years have followed, I've never been disappointed, which leaves me anticipating 2020 in Louisville, KY. I have attended many types of conferences over the years each with different purposes and focus, but they all, from the outside looking in, just happen. I walk in, take my seat, learn stuff and make friends, then go home knowing I had a great time because the conference just happened. But the reality of the matter is, conferences like the one we just had in Kansas City don't just happen, there's a lot of work which goes into them. However, none of it could happen without many volunteers and especially our sponsors. So I would like to take a moment to thank our sponsors, without whom the NBBQA National Conference couldn't "just happen."

Thanks to our sponsors, our bus tour to three Kansas City BBQ restaurants allowed our conference goers to arrive comfortably and in style. These sponsors didn't just stop here; they were integral in other areas of our stay in KC. Prairie Fresh not only sponsored one of the buses but also our Thursday lunch which was prepared by Operation BBQ Relief. They also stepped in as sponsor of the People's Choice for the BBQ Bash. The second bus was courtesy of Old World Spices from the Kansas City area. They were also multi-event sponsors by being the title sponsor for Saturday's SCA steak cook-off.

We discussed the concept of branding your BBQ business during one of our educational sessions; because whether you're a competition team, have a rub, or operate a restaurant, branding is important. The NBBQA is no different when it comes to

branding the conference, and it could not successfully happen without Cheerwine. As one of the most recognizable brands in BBQ, it was fitting they return as our conference branding sponsor. They are always a big hit at the national conference; a point illustrated by the often, empty red and white coolers when I would try to grab a old bottle.

One of my favorite parts of the conference each year is the knowledge I take home to implement in my business. All of the great classes offered will undoubtedly help me to grow. I regret I'm only one person and can't get to them all; however, Kent and Barret Black had the right idea when Kent told me they are dividing and conquering so they can get to as much as they can. One whole room of sessions, including a discussion on how to prepare for a media presentation, was sponsored by Sonny's BBQ out of Florida.

The morning Keynote sessions are a highlight every year. So many have told us the history of BBQ, motivated us to aspire to do more and have great success. Traeger knows the value of having a great keynote so they sponsored Friday's keynote, Larry Winget, who was the topic of many conversations for the rest of the day.

Growing up, family reunions were a major yearly event because sometimes it was the only time we got to see some of the family. Perhaps this is one of the reasons I'm drawn to the conference year after year. You can't have a family reunion without food prepared by great cooks. This year's Night of Fire was brought to us by Kansas City's own Smithfield Foods, and their quality pork was prepared by the Chicago Culinary Kitchen. The food that night was amazing and left us wanting more.

The one thing that gets my motor running in the morning is a nice hot cup of coffee and I know some of you all feel the exact same way. I've seen some of your shirts which read, "Don't talk to me until I've had my coffee." So you can imagine how excited I was to have Texas Sludge at this year's conference to get me presentable each morning as they were our meal break sponsors. Thank goodness for that Texas Pecan.

There are many highlights each year at the conference and one of the biggest highlights is Saturday's BBQ Bash. The setting for this was beautiful right across the street from the Kansas City Marriott Downtown and just a perfect day for it. Making all of this possible was our title sponsor, ACE Hardware, who also had practically a whole store of BBQ supplies for bash goers to peruse.

To top the day off was the SCA Steak competition, which was sponsored Old World Spices, where the winner received a golden ticket to the world finals in October. The two ancillary components is what made this especially fun this year. One was Spam which is always a blast seeing what these grill cooks can create and the other was turkey which was provided to the competitors by the Turkey Federation. Meat for the main Steak competition was provided by Certified Angus Beef.

Another one of the major highlights of the NBBQA National Conference each year is the Awards of Excellence where the best in the industry send their sauces, rubs, products and media offerings to be judged to find out who has the year's best. This all starts many weeks prior to the conference and could not be done without Amy Mills and her 17th Street BBQ team. Everything is shipped to them where Amy has her team taste test every sauce and rub to determine who receives the coveted Awards of Excellence Medal.

In addition to all of our sponsors, to whom we are grateful, were all the exhibitors who contributed to make this year's conference a great success as people gathered around to see the latest products. A big thanks goes to Gunter Wilhelm, Flame Boss, B&B Charcoal, Rib Lickers, Game Changer, Grilla Gold, Sucklebusters, Rockwood Charcoal, Big Green Egg, Smoking Ghost, the SCA, The Best of Your City and of course Operation BBQ Relief.

As you can see, national conferences like ours only appear to "just happen" because of all the great sponsors who get behind the NBBQA to help our membership grow as BBQ and Grilling Professionals. Without them, there is no way we would be able to provide the sessions, events, awards and the social gatherings we enjoy so much year after year.

While the dust of this year's conference begins to settle and we

start to apply all we learned, I hope you're as excited as I am and anticipating next year's conference. We will be busy going about the #businessofbbq and because of all our sponsors, both old and new, it will "just happen" to be the best one yet.

See you in Louisville, Kentucky April 1-4, 2020



Every year the National BBQ and Grilling Association runs the Awards of Excellence, acknowledging the commercial side of BBQ. Here are the talented winners of the 2019 awards, presented live at the NBBQA conference in Kansas City.

Best Rubs

All Purpose Spicy Rub

- 1st – Cajun Rub – Fat Boy All Natural BBQ
- 2nd – Pork Rub – Nuthatch Hill BBQ Comapny
- 3rd – All Purpose Red Rub – 3 Taxi Guys

All Purpose Seafood Rub

- 1st – Sea Dog Rub – Code 3 Spices
- 2nd – All Purpose Rub – Grilla Grills
- 3rd – Sizzlin' Seafood – Saucy Minx BBQ

All Purpose Poultry Rub

- 1st – Tumbleweed All Purpose Rub – Prairie Smoke & Spice
- 2nd – Chicken & Pork Rub – Veterans Q BBQ
- 3rd – Kluck'n Rub – Skeeter's Southern BBQ

All Purpose Pork Rub

- 1st – The Juicy Pig – Wild Bill's
- 2nd – C-Cubed Original Rub – C-Cubed
- 3rd – Chicken & Pork Rub – Veterans Q Barbecue Sauces & Rubs

All Purpose Beef Rub

- 1st – "It's all about the Meats...and More" – UrbanQ Smokesauce
- 2nd – Competition Basic Beef – Wild Bill's
- 3rd – Steer Season – Meat Mitch

Best Sauces

Hot Sauce

- 1st – Fat Boy Trail Blazer Wing & Hot Sauce – Bar B Que Specialties
- 2nd – Cookies Wings-N-Things Hot Sauce – Cookies Food Products
- 3rd – Wild Bill's Wing Sauce – Wild Bill's

White Sauce

- 1st – Music City White Sauce – Jack Cawthon's Bar-B-Que
- 2nd – Alabama White – BBQ'd Productions
- 3rd – Quintessential White Sauce – Four 41 South

Mustard Sauce

- 1st – Sweet & Sassy – Hoosier Daddy BBQ
- 2nd – Honey Dijon Barbecue 'n Brat Sauce – Croix Valley Foods
- 3rd – Slow Smoke Gold BBQ Sauce – House of Q

Fruit Sauce

- 1st – Raspberry Chipotle – Eroc's
- 2nd – Smokey Raspberry – Jake & Aimee's Sauces

- 3rd – Apple Q – Old Hickory Pits

Vinegar Mild Sauce

- 1st – Champions' Blend BBQ Sauce – Blues Hog
- 2nd – Original BBQ Sauce – SuckleBusters
- 3rd – Sweet & Sassy – Hoosier Daddy BBQ

Vinegar Spicy

- 1st – Ghost Roast – Hoosier Daddy BBQ
- 2nd – Meat Mitch Whomp! Sauce – Meat Mitch
- 3rd – FUBAR Flamethrower – WarPig BBQ

Tomato Mild

- 1st – Historic Original – Historic BBQ
- 2nd – Arkansaw Hog Sauce – Arkansaw Hog Sauce
- 3rd – Original Barbecue Sauce – Veterans Q Barbecue Sauces & Rubs

Tomato Spicy

- 1st – Pitty Que Spicy BBQ Sauce – Pitty Que
- 2nd – Thick & Bold BBQ Sauce – Grilla Grills
- 3rd – Ghost Roast – Hoosier Daddy BBQ

BBQ Products

Best Gift Pack

- 1st – "Meat Mitch Whomp! Sauce & Rub gift box - Meat Mitch
- 2nd – Gift Pack - Cool Smoke
- 3rd – Blues Hog Premium Gift Set - Blues Hog

Best Apparel

- 1st – BBQ Shotgun T-shirt - Japanese BBQ Foundation
- 2nd – We Back the Blue t-shirt - BBQ'd Productions
- 3rd – Texas Trinity T-shirt - B&B Charcoal Products

Best Tool/Accessory

- 1st – Meat Mitter - Smokin Ghost BBQ
- 2nd – Meat Shredding Claws - Grilla Grills
- 3rd – Full Power Injector System - Chop's Power Injector Systems

Best Label

- 1st – Smokin Ghost BBQ Steak & Brisket Rub – Smokin Ghost BBQ
- 2nd – Croix Valley Blue-B-Cue Sauce – Croix Valley Foods
- 3rd – Southern Tangy BBQ Sauce – The Rib Doctor

Digital Media Awards

Video Series

- 1st – Beyond the Flame - Adam Roberts
- 2nd – Loot N' Booty - Loot N' Booty

3rd – Bama Q - Michael Smith

Single Video

1st – Gyro - Loot N' Booty

2nd – Rib Doctor - Haywood Harris, Jr

3rd – Sonny's 24K Rib - Montana Coleman

Audio Series

1st – Behind the Smoke - Shawn Walchef

2nd – BBQ Beat - Kevin Sandridge

3rd – Smoking Hot Confessions - Ben Arnot

Blog/Website

1st – Bush Cooking – <https://bushcooking.com/>

2nd – Smoking Hot Confessions – <https://smoking-hotconfessions.com/>

3rd – Rockwood Charcoal – <https://rockwoodcharcoal.com/>

Publications

1st – National Barbecue News - <https://www.barbecue-news.com/>

2nd – Meat+Poultry Magazine - <https://www.meat-poultry.com/>

3rd – National Dutch Oven News - <https://www.idos.org/>

Book

1st – Project Frie - Steven Raichlen

2nd – Cool Smoke - Tuffy Stone

3rd – Ribs - Adam Roberts

BBQ Food Photography Award

1st – Bacon Potato - Ash Hodgson

2nd – Doug Short Ribs - Rogue Cookers

3rd – Steak My Way - Darren Proctor

BBQ Commercial Photography Award

1st – Knob Creek – Robert Jacob Lerma

2nd – Sucklebusters – Sucklebusters

3rd – Burning Rockwood – Rockwood



MAY 2019

Photography Awards

Live Fire Photography Award

1st – Overnight Hog – Robert Jacob Lerma

2nd – Dinner 1700 Style - Ash Hodgson

3rd – Caveman Steak - Darren Proctor



BBQ Character Photography Award

1st – Boss of the Chimney Cartel - Ash Hodgson

2nd – Elliot Moss - Robert Jacob Lerma

3rd – Junior - Junior Urias



BBQ Personal Photography Award

1st – Sam Jones – Robert Jacob Lerma

2nd – Steak – Ash Hodgson

3rd – Spatchcoak – Rogue Cookers



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