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NEBS Spotlight Of The Month

Craig Kimberly

Tell us how you go into BBQ and what you are doing these days. In my life, I've never been capable of half-way, sorta into it, lemme just dabble a bit. Like most of you, I tend to "go hard" into anything that catches my interest. And BBQ has been no exception. It's commanded my life in just one year. Now, I've been obsessed with smoking and grilling for almost 2 decades, but it's the last 12 months that have changed my life. In this past year I've attended Memphis in May twice, I became a KCBS certified barbecue judge, competed with the team The Cider Boys as a judge, judged my first contest, traveled from Vermont to the Delta and beyond tasting 'Que, launched a new YouTube cooking channel called BBQ iT (youtube.com/bbqit), started a competition bbq team (Grand Smoke Railroad), competed in Patio Porkers in Memphis, and was elected to the NEBS board of directors.

Getting from there to here is not an uncommon path -- many of you have traveled along as well. It starts with small BBQ's, a little party at your house, a gathering at your best friend's place, -- all harmless activities. But pretty soon folks start to rave about your Que, you have a grill or two, and then boom! It happens! You own 30 grills and smokers, not a paper towel roll in the house is clean, your clothes, beard, hair, and house all smell like barbecue and firewood, and things become sticky that never were before! BBQ has taken over your life!

My take-over started to get out of hand when I "stumbled" across Memphis in May last year while on a road trip filming a blues documentary with my buddy Ted Reed (we both make TV and film). While in the truck traveling along, I tuned into Malcom and Rachelle Reed's fresh new podcast for HowToBBQRight. Malcom mentioned that the coming week was Memphis in May World Championship BBQ Cooking Contest. I was in!

At the time, I was planning on launching a barbecue channel on YouTube. I had produced hundreds of videos for several

websites, and after pressure and encouragement from friends and family, I was finally going to combine my two passions: BBQ and TV. If I managed to get my camera into MIM, I was planning on tracking Malcom Reed down, getting an interview, and possibly some advice about my upcoming channel. Well, that's exactly what happened. Once Ted and I got over the initial shock of the scale and outright awesomeness of MIM, I tracked down Malcom.



After a brief introduction, I had the green light for the interview. I've watched all of his videos, so I was excited to finally meet who I consider the best barbecue Youtuber out there. In those 15 minutes I spent with Malcom, I learned so much! Malcom was the exact person he was in person as he is on camera -- real solid dude. In that interview, I asked him for advice on things from building a YouTube channel, to competing at Memphis in May. I took every bit of advice that he gave, and I put it into action. I asked about competing, he said "Become a CBJ." I asked about the daunting task of launching BBQ iT channel online, he said "Just start it, and get consistent!" Malcom and Rachelle were amazing that day. They gave a great interview and possibly changed my life with their advice.

This past May, I had the opportunity to catch up with Malcom and Rachelle Reed once again, right back in Memphis at the World Championships. Except for this time, I was a CBJ, I had a team, competing in a booth right behind Malcom's, and I had already launched my BBQiT channel. I had to do a follow-up interview. I was beaming when I told Malcom how I had taken all of his advice and encouragement and went out there and made it happen. After handing over a hat from my local barbecue club as a gift, I think I saw him beaming as well.

So, thank you to the BBQ universe, this giant family that has nothing but good folks at its core. It's time for spell check and hitting the road, Grand Smoke Railroad has a competition at the Hartford Rib-Off in 11 hours!