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# WOMEN IN BBQ

## THREE PART SERIES

By Claire Driessen



**Emily Wickstrom**  
Last Call Heroes BBQ

**Whats your BBQ**

**Team/Catering/restaurant/sauce etc.** Last Call Heroes BBQ

**How did you start in BBQ?** I started in BBQ three years ago when I started dating Travis Duffy, head cook of Last Call Heroes BBQ.

**Favorite thing to smoke?** My favorite thing to smoke is Mac and cheese and bacon-wrapped chicken breast stuffed with cheese

**What's your motto?** Never trust a skinny cook  
**What is the best BBQ secret you've learned?** Tenderness always wins!

**Secret to your comp team success?** Being consistent in all 4 bbq categories

**Who is your BBQ Mentor?** Kevin Huber of Sin Circle BBQ, even though I am a better cook ??

**What your Best BBQ memory?** When Travis and I won Grand Champion in Miles City, MT in 2018. It was Travis' first GC ever.

**When you're smoking what's one thing you have to have?** I need a Vodka and Orange juice from Rum 'N Smoke BBQ or a Bloody Mary from Papa's Pit Crew.

**How many years have you been in BBQ?** 3

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**Tonia Dobosenski**  
Rub My Rack

**Whats your BBQ**  
**Team/Catering/restaurant/**  
**sauce etc.: Rub My Rack**

**How did you start in BBQ?** I was working at a daycare and my boss (Mike Jay) was starting a local competition in Brainerd, MN. He needed more pro. judges so I was recruited (told) to take the day off and get certified and judge the comp that weekend. Stan, who was my boyfriend at the time tagged along. We had an awesome time. A few years after we got married we went on a trip to Alabama and helped a team who was competing at a comp. We were totally convinced we had to try it. So, the next summer we jumped right into the pro division. We competed in our home-town Brainerd comp with little 4 year old Zoe and with baby



Gemma strapped to the front of me and I was already pregnant with the next one (Maizie). We got a 5th place call and we were hooked. It all started there. The entire family was already involved.

**Favorite thing to smoke?** Vegetables or pork loin if I am eating it. Ribs or pork are my favorite for competition meats.

**What's your motto?** I have many:

Don't have it all together, but together have it all.

Put on your war paint ladies! It's time to slay this dragon!  
Always be kind

**What is the best BBQ secret you've learned?** How to cook to tender.

**Secret to your comp team success?** Team work and love.

**Who is your BBQ Mentor?** I have many bbq mentors or teachers (Tuffy Stone, Travis Clark, Paul Kirk, Nathan Dexter, Jay Craig and so many others). My bbq elvis is Johnny Trigg.

**What your Best BBQ memory?** Our 5th place at the Royal in 2019. And of course every Kids Que win.

**When you're smoking what's one thing you have to have?** Fire.

**How many years have you been in BBQ?** It feels like we have done bbq forever but we've been competing on the KCBS circuit for 7 years.



**Jodi Christopher**  
Smokin' Heartland BBQ

**Name of company?**

Smokin' Heartland BBQ, LLC

**How did you get into BBQ?**

My husband and his family have owned restaurants and have been in the food business for years. Smoked meats became a favorite staple on many buffet lines in their restaurant(s) and personally.

**Favorite thing to smoke is?**

His favorite thing to smoke is Prime Rib.

**What's your motto?**

What's the hardest part of any meal? The meat! So, let us do the cooking for you. (I can't say the unofficial one ;)

**What is the best BBQ secret you have learned?**

Take your time...let the smoke and heat do its thing!

**Secret to your comp team success?**

It is a passion, so have fun! Make connections with others in the business also as you can get some great tips.

**Who is your BBQ mentor?**

My husband's father and step-mother are our mentors for both BBQ and sides/garnish.

#### **What's your best BBQ memory?**

Watching that custom tandem axle Yoder finally come home. It was the talk of the town as the rig brought it to us!

#### **When you're smoking, what's the once thing you have to have?**

Can't smoke without a good rub and perhaps a beverage ;)

#### **How many years have you been in BBQ?**

My husband has, for a number of years, with his family but officially as Smokin' Heartland BBQ, since 2015.

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**Lu Barbecue-Holter, a/k/a The Duchess**

Croix Valley Sauces

#### **Whats your BBQ Team/Catering/restaurant/sauce etc.**

Croix Valley Sauces

[www.croixvalleyfoods.com](http://www.croixvalleyfoods.com)

#croixvalleynation

#### **How did you start in BBQ?**

I entered a local rib competition back in 2009 to help promote my line of rubs and sauces and was hooked! I started looking immediately for other competitions to enter and found the KCBS and the MN BBQ Society. The MN BBQ Society has been an invaluable resource for information, support, and growth for me in BBQ.

#### **Favorite thing to smoke?**

Pork. Pork. And more Pork. All things pork. Especially Compart Duroc Family Farms Pork - YUM!

#### **What's your motto?**

Imperfection is beauty, madness is genius and it's better to be absolutely ridiculous than absolutely boring.

#### **What is the best BBQ secret you've learned?**

BBQ is an ever changing art that requires time and constant adaptation to changing opinions and local preferences. It can be difficult and disheartening at times. I always go back to why I started doing this - to have fun! My best secret - BBQ'ing is fun. Don't forget it!

#### **Secret to your comp team's success?**

Our team works very hard and is very dedicated to our craft, that being said, even with our efforts and passions we would not be successful without the connections we have made with other teams, judges, and BBQ product manufacturers. Getting to know other teams and their cook and presentation methods inspires our methods. Getting to know judges and what they like and don't like impact our approach to the cooking process. Getting to know grill manufacturers and their passion for their products influences our appreciation for their product and makes our use of that product more effective. Meeting farmers and meat processors and fully understanding their processes and methods are priceless. The efforts and success of all the people involved in our cooking process before we even sign up for a competition is key



to our success and deeply appreciated.

#### **Who is your BBQ Mentor?**

That's a tough one. I can't say I have a specific mentor. I would say I am most inspired when I see a female pitmaster cooking on her own, having a blast, and kicking some....boys down the score sheet.

#### **What your Best BBQ memory?**

My best memory was the day I got to walk away from the legal field that I had been working in to focus on my BBQ business full time. I love everyday fully immersed in the world of BBQ and enjoy sharing my passion for cooking with others.

#### **When you're smoking what's one thing you have to have?**

Patience! Trusting the meat and the heat to do their thing. I love the way BBQ helps me to slow down and enjoy my time spent around the pit.

#### **How many years have you been in BBQ?**

I have been BBQ for 10 years with my soulmate and husband, Damon. That's the only shout out you're getting, honey. Remember me when you get interviewed for the bearded men of BBQ article.

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**Brigitte Turner, A.K.A Mrs Smoak**

BIGG Smoak BBQ Smokehouse and Grill



My day and BBQ job consist of running BIGG Smoak BBQ Smokehouse and Grill in Steinbach MB, Canada. Our restaurant offers full dine in experience of southern Q, handhelds, pizzas, wings and so much more. We also cater and run a vending trailer. When its time to get ready to hit the BBQ trail, I make up the sauces, injections and wrap juices as well as building boxes and choosing what goes in them.

I was forced into BBQ! Lol just kidding! I got to experiment on a Weber Kettle. Then my husband, BIGG Smoak, had this crazy idea to compete. I said we weren't ready. Well, I was proved wrong when we ended up with a GC!

There isn't one thing that I like to smoke. I love to smoke everything! From bacon wrapped water chestnuts to Prime Rib. Just the smells and sound from the kettle or stick burner is all it takes! I do not have a motto. I just wing it!

**Best BBQ secret?** Just cook your cook. Do what you feel passionate about.

**BBQ Mentor?** Hands down my husband! He absorbs so much from everyone in the BBQ world!

**Best BBQ memory?** So many! But having not been able to attend the 40th American Royal in 2019 and watching the awards live and seeing my husband place 18th overall was so awesome!!

I never BBQ without my Thermo pen

We started competing in June 2014 and have since competed in over 40 competitions.

BRING ON 2020!

# Minnesota Upcoming Events

April 11, 2020: Spring Training 2020, University of Minnesota Andrew Boss Meat Science Laboratory, Falcon Heights, MN, FMI: <http://mnbbqsociety.com/classes>.

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