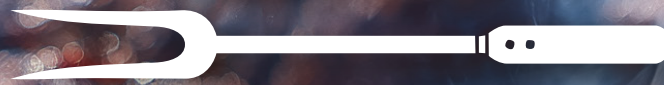




The State of
BBQ

★ REPORT ★



VOL. 1

UNDERSTANDING AMERICA'S GRILL GAP

2026

THE AMERICAN-OWNED PORK BRAND, PRAIRIE FRESH[®],

surveyed more than 1,500 U.S. adults who grill, barbecue or smoke outdoors to understand how Americans approach BBQ. The study measured both confidence, what people think they know, and competence, what they actually know.

CONFIDENCE:

Self-perceived BBQ knowledge



COMPETENCE:

Actual BBQ knowledge and best practices

Example: “How confident are you that you could cook the following BBQ methods on your own?”

Example: “What is the best way to properly light charcoal for grilling?”

WHEN WE COMPARED THE TWO, THE DIFFERENCE WAS STRIKING.

AMERICA HAS A BBQ CONFIDENCE/COMPETENCE GAP

Many Americans love BBQ and feel confident at the grill, but the data shows there is still room to grow when it comes to foundational knowledge. On average, people rate their abilities about one-third higher than their actual knowledge.



32% higher confidence than actual knowledge

CONFIDENCE

6.3/10

ACTUAL KNOWLEDGE

4.8/10

BBQ IS ONE OF THE ONLY ACTIVITIES IN WHICH PEOPLE FEEL LIKE EXPERTS BEFORE THEY BECOME ONE.

THE COMPETENCE GAP:

MOST BBQERS OVERESTIMATE THEIR FUNDAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE.

Many BBQers feel confident in their skills, but that confidence is often limited to familiar tools like charcoal or gas grills. Many can cook on them, but few understand the fundamentals.



PRAIRIE
FRESH

66% are confident using a charcoal grill but more than

67% do not know how to properly light charcoal.



45% are confident using a smoker but

77% cannot accurately describe what a smoke ring is.

AMERICANS THINK GRILLING SKILLS ARE INHERENT. BBQ OFTEN GETS TREATED AS INSTINCTUAL, WHICH MAKES OVERLOOKING THE FUNDAMENTALS EASY.

PORK: WHEN CONFIDENCE BREAKS DOWN

With pork, grillers feel less certain in their BBQ knowledge. It is widely loved for its taste and versatility, but it's often avoided by those cooking.

80% like the taste of pork.

26% avoid cooking pork altogether.

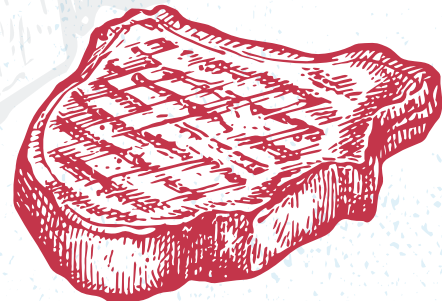
Why? Lack of basic knowledge leads to incorrect cooking temperature and meat cut identification.

82% of Americans don't know the correct temperature to cook a pork loin.

71% incorrectly identify meat cuts from the pork shoulder.



**SAFE TEMP: 145 F
+ 3-MINUTE REST
FOR PORK CHOPS
AND LOINS**

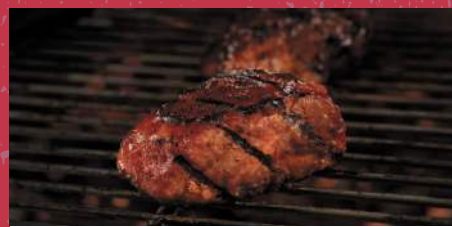


MOST GRILLERS DO NOT AVOID PORK ALTOGETHER. THEY SIMPLY NARROW THE CUTS THEY FEEL MOST COMFORTABLE COOKING, OFTEN STICKING TO FAMILIAR OPTIONS.

WHY PORK FEELS COMPLICATED



PORK BUTT: NOT FROM THE BUTT



COUNTRY-STYLE RIBS: NOT REALLY RIBS



CHOPS & LOINS: SAME CUT, CUT DIFFERENT

WHEN PORK FEELS COMPLICATED, PEOPLE PLAY IT SAFE OR SKIP IT.

BBQ STILL DELIVERS EVEN IF THE RESULTS DON'T



So what keeps BBQers coming back? It's not just about getting it right. It's also about the feelings that BBQ brings to the heart and the stomach, even if the results are only "good enough."

58% say BBQ helps them
escape the everyday grind.

That's a **25%** increase
from 2024.



56% grill to bring
people together.

RELAXED: The word most associated with
how people feel while grilling

52% say when there's
a reason to celebrate
the grill is the centerpiece.

58% are excited at the
opportunity to try
new flavor combinations.

**BBQ CREATES MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES LONG BEFORE PEOPLE FEEL THEY
HAVE MASTERED EVERY TECHNIQUE. THAT IS WHAT KEEPS PEOPLE
COMING BACK.**

PEOPLE WANT TO KEEP LEARNING



Consumers are actively looking for approachable ways to improve their BBQ knowledge and try new things on their own terms.

63% say trying new flavors keeps them interested in BBQ.

57% enjoy experimenting with flavors or ingredients.

93% would consider a BBQ bundle that would help them execute more successfully.

CONSUMERS ARE MOTIVATED LEARNERS LOOKING FOR WAYS TO BUILD CONFIDENCE AND CONSISTENCY AT THE GRILL.



HOW AMERICA SHOWS UP AT THE GRILL

Historically, grilling has often been viewed as a male-driven space, but today's BBQ culture tells a more balanced story.

While men report slightly higher confidence in their BBQ abilities, actual grilling knowledge and performance are nearly identical between men and women.

Men are about
8 % more
confident
at BBQ.

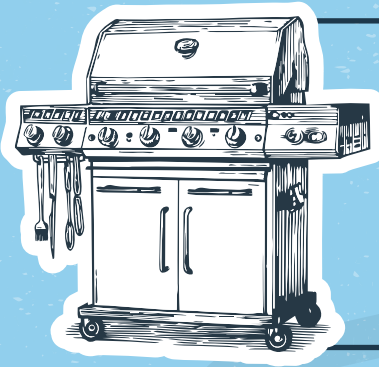


Actual BBQ knowledge
is **nearly identical**
between men
and women.

**BBQ KNOWLEDGE IS MORE EVENLY SHARED
THAN STEREOTYPES SUGGEST.**

PERSONALITIES

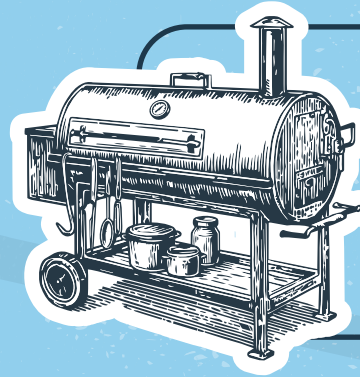
The BBQ survey revealed that while Americans approach BBQ differently, most grillers fall into a few recognizable personality types, each with their own strengths and style at the grill.



THE SHOWMAN

Strength: Runs the grill like a stage and thrives on feeding a crowd.

Weakness: Sometimes the performance matters more than the precision.



APEX PITMASTER

Strength: The most capable and confident BBQer in the backyard.

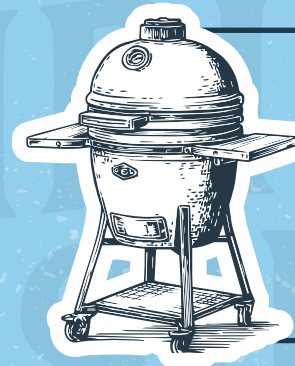
Weakness: Confidence can turn into tunnel vision or know-it-allness.



FAMILY FLAMEKEEPER

Strength: Keeps the grill going and makes sure the family gets fed.

Weakness: Plays it safe and rarely ventures beyond the same reliable cuts and techniques.



FIERY UPSTART

Strength: An ambitious learner eager to level up their BBQ skills.

Weakness: Enthusiasm can outpace experience, leading to overcomplicated cooks.



HUMBLE MENTOR

Strength: A quiet veteran with hard-earned BBQ wisdom.

Weakness: Loyalty to the old ways can make this BBQer resistant to new cuts or methods.



RUSTY GRILLS

Strength: BBQs, even if only occasionally.

Weakness: Infrequent grilling means confidence and skills have faded over time.

NO MATTER THE TYPE, MOST BBQERS ARE CLOSER TO GETTING IT RIGHT THAN THEY THINK.

Segments derived from confidence, competence and behavioral data.

BBQ ISN'T REGIONAL ANYMORE

American BBQ is as diverse as the country itself. The beauty of it all is that for every clear favorite that is ubiquitous (Kansas City or Texas), there are obscure emerging styles (Central California or Chicago Aquarium) that are breathing new life into the great American tradition.



AMERICANS' FAVORITE BBQ BY REGION (%)

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. KANSAS CITY (17%) | 8. NORTH CAROLINA (6%) |
| 2. CENTRAL TEXAS (11%) | 9. ST. LOUIS (5%) |
| 3. SOUTH CAROLINA (10%) | 10. EAST TEXAS (5%) |
| 4. MEMPHIS (10%) | 11. CENTRAL CALIFORNIA (3%) |
| 5. HAWAIIAN (9%) | 12. CHICAGO AQUARIUM (3%) |
| 6. KENTUCKY (7%) | |
| 7. WEST TEXAS (6%) | |

NO ONE AGREES ON A TRIED-AND-TRUE "TOP BBQ REGION" ANYMORE.

BBQ is one of American's most enduring traditions, and grillers are experimenting more than ever.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT RETAIL

That same confidence shapes how people shop for BBQ. BBQ is not just a meat purchase.

It is a full-meal occasion.

98% of BBQ shoppers buy more than just meat.


63% prefer BBQ bundles with flavor options.

Shoppers are already building the basket. They are just doing it without guidance. **This is the missing piece.**

BBQers want guidance that will help them succeed.



 **Most BBQ purchase decisions are driven by instinct.**

 **But about half of shoppers are influenced by in-store guidance.**

When BBQ feels easier to choose and cook, people buy more and more often.

Prairie Fresh® helps BBQers get better at something they already love. With consistent, high-quality and simple guidance, great pork becomes easier to get right.



**AMERICAN PORK DONE RIGHT
GENUINE QUALITY YOU CAN TRUST.**

READY TO FIND
YOUR BBQ
PERSONALITY?



The State of
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Source: Prairie Fresh 2026 State of BBQ Survey. Conducted Jan. 8 to 16, 2026, among 1,507 U.S. adults who grill, barbecue or smoke at least a few times per year. Percentages rounded. Findings based on a mix of self-reported behavior and knowledge-based questions. Fielded Jan. 8 to 16, 2026. National sample with quotas for region and gender. © Seaboard Foods 2026