

"The Quest for Fire"

As seen in the Memphis Flyer

With freedom in mind, the contest was fashioned after good ole American democracy. Restaurants were not told that the orders of ribs would be used for a contest: We judged the 'cue that anyone can get on any given day. Ribs were then assigned numbers, so the judges didn't know where they came from. Armed with score sheets based on those used in the Memphis in May contest (which broke down judging into four categories: Appearance of Entry, Tenderness of Entry, Flavor of Entry, and Overall Impression), our motley 'cue crew got to work. Rib by rib, we employed all of our senses to determine who has the best ribs in Memphis. Each judge had his or her preferences, of course, but cumulatively we came up with a final ranking. Who won? Read on, reader.

...The Pig on Beale: Neither as universally known as the likes of Rendezvous or Corky's, nor boasting the hipster/connoisseur cred of Cozy Corner or Payne's, The Pig on Beale is a relatively recent entrant to the Memphis' 'cue scene, and it's tucked away on Memphis' most famous street, where music and nightlife tend to overshadow food. But our judges were impressed by the consistent, smoky, "pink to the bone" flavor of the Pig's ribs: "Too sweet and very little spice, but the smoke is brilliant. The meat's flavor swells in the mouth," one judge wrote. "Tender, smoky," another said. "Tender and easy to bite off the bone - a nice lean texture. It's sweet on top and smoky underneath. Good flavor," one judge decided. The sweetness of the Pig's offerings was the only aspect that split our judges, though everyone appreciated the beauty of the "dark, red, caramelized exterior." "It's a dessert rib," one judge wrote, capturing what seemed to be a consensus of opinion.