



BBQ LOADED MAC AND CHEESE



BBQ PULLED PORK SANDWICH

Howling BBQ

By Danny Fairchild

You know who loves a good food truck? Everybody. Everybody loves a good food truck. Ask anybody. And so I'm pleased to report that Howling BBQ is a damn good food truck. Find it, and eat the food.

I know what you're thinking: "But Danny! How could this be true? Food trucks require quick food prep, and smoking meats, aka BBQ, takes hours!" What? You think brick-and-mortar BBQ joints aren't smoking their meats starting hours in advance? Get the hell out of here with that nonsense. Really, BBQ is perfect for a food truck. As I've said in previous columns, BBQ travels pretty well. See any of your BBQ leftovers you've ever had for proof. So a traveling truck full of smoked pork butt is going to be juuuust fine, y'all. The time-consuming part of the food prep was done back at base with the smokers, so you're going to get your food pretty quick, too. So don't be foolish. BBQ food trucks are where it's at.

I've gone into some detail on the different traditions of BBQ in previous columns. Your Carolina, your Memphis, your Kansas City, your Texas. Howling BBQ is Texas BBQ, but that means different things to different Texans. They'll all claim THEIR Texas BBQ is true Texas BBQ, and it's best just to nod and agree

no matter what. I would characterize Howling BBQ as East Texas BBQ. With its hickory-smoked, falling-off-the-bone goodness and tomato-based sauce, I'd classify Howling BBQ as a pretty damn good example of Eastern Texas BBQ.

The sauce. Some BBQ fools will look at you like your life is forfeit if you so much as ask about sauce. Screw that, and screw them. BBQ sauce is yummy with a tradition all its own. My family BBQ sauce is maybe a little more Carolina style, for example. And unless we're family, I ain't ever gonna give you the recipe. Howling BBQ features their AppleQ BBQ sauce. Sweet and tangy with a rich, deep red color. Delicious.

On to the meat. As a food truck, Howling BBQ relies on the versatility of pulled pork. That's smart. You can do anything with pulled pork. And you should. It's like the mashed potatoes of BBQ. By the way, you should try pulled pork on mashed potatoes.

I only got the end product, so I can neither confirm nor deny, but I'm willing to bet whatever good reputation I have that Howling BBQ's pork butt falls right off the bone just by pressing it with a fork. It's called pulled pork, but I don't reckon it takes much pulling to get it to you.

As I was saying, pulled pork, particularly Howling BBQ's pulled pork, is very versatile, which I shall now demonstrate by sharing my experience with you. There's no bathroom to talk about because, y'know... food truck and all, so I can't include that in this column like I normally do. But that just means that your bathroom experience is whatever YOU make of it.

I caught up with Howling BBQ at Stonehill Communities on a Monday. I got all up in their DMs to ask where they were going to be that day, but that was foolish. Their Facebook page, as well as their website, are kept very well up-to-date as to where you can find them next.

The staff have their names and job titles printed on their uniform. A manager served me. And not just because I buy ink by the barrel. (I know that's an overstatement, but I always wanted to use that idiom.) I don't typically tell people who I am when I visit. The manager will likely serve YOU as well. Some food trucks look a bit suspect, but Howling BBQ, whether it's the newness, the dedication of the staff, or both, is clean as a whistle. Certainly, cleaner than a mobile BBQ joint has any right being. How do you NOT make a mess in that setting, eh?

There were two other people ahead of me, but I was back at my car, food in hand, within 10 minutes of arrival. Now here's what: Stonehill is waaaaay to hell on the north of the north end of Dubuque. I live out by Key West. That's the entire damn city of Dubuque, a city notorious for not having any good ways to get anywhere, between buying my food and eating my food at home. When I opened the clam-shell containers, they were STILL optimal. My pulled pork sandwich bun wasn't soggy or nothing. Now THAT'S what I'm talking about when I say BBQ travels well.

Let's talk about the pulled pork sandwich, shall we? You ever wonder who the heck buys those fried onion straws that you put on your Thanksgiving green bean casserole during the rest of the year?

BBQ joints, that's who. Howling BBQ puts a perfect amount on there. Just enough to complement, not overpower the pork. Just a welcome little crunch up in there. As I've said before, I don't know who first put coleslaw on a pork sandwich, but I'd like to offer them my blessing. Bless you, whoever you are. If you're not down with the onions or the coleslaw, don't fret. They give you a chance to nix those things on your sammich. It's finished with a non-sloppy amount of their AppleQ sauce, again with a perfect amount. Looking back at the description of this sandwich, it should've been falling apart all over the place. Nope. I'd almost eat that thing while driving. Almost. That's just irresponsible.

Next, I tried the BBQ loaded mac and cheese. You read that right. Now... admittedly, mac and cheese doesn't travel well. And by the time I got home, it had congealed a little. But that was mostly a visual issue. It still tasted amazing. This wasn't Kraft dinner here. Big elbow noodles with a good amount of cheese with the moisture of the pulled pork bringing back any life it may have lost. Again, we get the fried onion straws. I never thought I'd be happy ordering anything so casserole-esque from a food truck, but I'm here to show you the smile upon my face. (Grin.)

Next, the BBQ street tacos. Ohhh, my. This was my favorite. We can debate whether a taco is a sandwich and therefore just another pulled pork sandwich another time. No, on second thought, let's not. That sounds like a terrible time and doesn't do justice to these tacos. How many times have you ordered street tacos



BBQ STREET TACO

where the tortilla is falling apart all over the place? More than twice, I'd wager. I drove with two flour tortilla pulled pork street tacos, again with the fried onions, and the coleslaw allllll the way across town and... I kid you not... lost absolutely NO structural integrity. I came for the pulled pork sandwich. I'm going to go back again and again for the pulled pork tacos.

For drinks, Howling BBQ offers flavored lemonades. I had a watermelon lemonade. It reminds me of when I was a young man working summers in a shaved ice stand. I would mix the flavored syrups with my sodas and even my lemonades. It was good. It reminds me of that because that's precisely what it is. It washes the BBQ down real good.

So keep an eye out for the fire engine red food truck... well... actually, it's a food trailer. Coming to an employer's parking lot or a street market near you. Or just visit their Facebook page or website to find out where they'll be next.

Don't sleep on the tacos. ■



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