

Youth/Wordslinger

Startin' the Fire - A Book Review

by Shirl Brainard
The New Mexico Breeze

What did I know about Barbeque Competitions? Nada - I didn't know there was such a thing. Now I know.

Startin' the Fire, (how to start a BBQ team) by George Hensler, Rio Grande Books, 2010, would be my "bible" - if, understand IF - I wanted to "go on the circuit."

The 100-page book is *not* about cooking - there's not one recipe

in the whole book. No, it is about organizing and planning all the details to make you a successful contestant. I wished, however, that in the beginning of the book he explained exactly what and how a competition works. I had a little problem with not knowing *Why* he was "getting a team," for *what purpose*. It would have helped to know the meaning of "the box." Some other terms were used from the beginning - usual terminology for this venture, but unknown terms to me. He probably assumed that only seasoned (excuse the pun) BBQ-ers would be reading his book. Finally, at the end of the book, *KCBS* was explained: *Kansas City Barbeque Society*. It would have been nice

if such esoteric BBQ terms had been offered in the beginning.

Otherwise, he tells us how to choose a team; (appointing yourself as leader is good because it was *your idea*); delegating and dividing other responsibilities due to skills; and even choosing a name for the team. He suggests keeping your information in a notebook, including money sources and management; doing research, such as visiting real competitions as an onlooker or as a volunteer; checking websites (several are given); taking various pertinent classes, from cooking to judging; and learning about rules and regulations.

George doesn't miss a thing. Consider transportation - not only getting *your team* to a site, but how about equipment storage? Where do you sleep? What do you eat? Surprise - for a probable two-day sojourn,

you're *not going to eat BBQ!*

He talks about equipment, including what to consider when buying a cooker. He provides a master checklist of needed items and supplies.

Finally, George explains the total process of a competition and suggests that before you enter a contest, have a *timed* trial run. He also reminds us of Murphy's Law.

There are a few anecdotes. One is about possibly overdoing *practice makes perfect*. He wanted to perfect a chicken thigh recipe, but found that after 180 thighs, it had turned into *Poultry Addiction*, and now, at the suggestion of his shrink, he never says c-----n any more.

I think such a lifestyle is like a food with which you're not acquainted ... it's an acquired taste.

