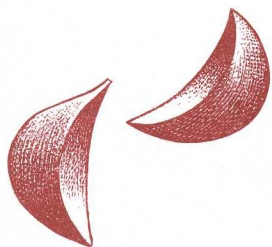


Most Memphis barbecue restaurants serve their ribs wet, but Charlie Vergos' Rendezvous downtown has probably sold more dry ribs than any place in the country. Layered with spices, the ribs come out of the kitchen as crunchy as corn chips, a perfect accompaniment to the barrels of beer served nightly in the raucous rathskeller.



Lone Star Spareribs

In Kansas City, Memphis, and other rib capitals, most barbeque cooks cook in a "wet" style, applying a sauce near the end of the cooking and again before serving. In Texas, where people love to be contrary, the ribs are often left "dry," as they are here.

BARBECUED RIB RUB

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1/3 cup ground black pepper | 1 tablespoon chili powder |
| 1/4 cup paprika | 1 1/2 teaspoons garlic powder |
| 2 tablespoons sugar | 1 1/2 teaspoons onion powder |
| 1 tablespoon salt | |
| 3 full slabs of pork spareribs, "St. Louis cut" (trimmed of the chine bone and brisket flap), preferably 3 pounds each or less | |

BASIC BEER MOP (OPTIONAL)

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 12 ounces beer | 2 garlic cloves, minced |
| 1/2 cup cider vinegar | 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce |
| 1/2 cup water | 1 tablespoon Barbecued Rib Rub |
| 1/4 cup oil, preferably canola or corn | |
| 1/2 medium onion, chopped | |

Serves 6

The night before you plan to barbecue, combine the rub ingredients in a small bowl. Apply the rub evenly to the ribs, reserving about half of the spice mixture. Place the slabs in a plastic bag and refrigerate them overnight.

Before you begin to barbecue, take the ribs from the refrigerator. Pat them down with the remaining rub, reserving 1 tablespoon of it if you plan to use the mop. Let the ribs sit at room temperature for 30 to 40 minutes. Prepare the smoker for barbecuing, bringing the temperature to 200° F to 220° F.

If you are going to baste the ribs (see chapter 3, "To Mop or Not"), mix together the beer, vinegar, water, oil,