



# TRUE 'CUE NEWS

## From the Campaign for Real Barbecue

February 2016

This is the fourth issue of *True 'Cue News*. If you missed an earlier issue and would like a copy, drop us a note at [TrueCue@gmail.com](mailto:TrueCue@gmail.com). If you have anything of interest to supporters of Real Barbecue—old places closing or turning to gas, new places opening, obituaries of barbecue legends, whatever—please send it along to that same address.

You can also follow us on [Facebook](#).

### New Patrons

We are delighted to welcome three newcomers to the Campaign's distinguished [company of Patrons](#):

**Rien Fertel**, a free-lance writer and professional historian who calls New Orleans home. has [documented](#) dozens of barbecue places in western Tennessee and the Carolinas for the Southern Foodways Alliance. His book [The One True Barbecue](#), (subtitled *Fire, Smoke, and the Pitmasters Who Cook the Whole Hog*) will be published this spring.

**Jack Hitt**, a Peabody Award-winning journalist, has written about a great many subjects, one of them the barbecue of [his native South Carolina](#). He now lives in New Haven, where he can take credit for introducing whole-hog barbecue to the Ivy League at what is now Yale's [Annual Jack Hitt Pig Roast](#).

**Jim Shahin**, whose barbecue education began during his 24 years in Texas and continued during his national and international travels, is an award-winning journalist. Jim teaches at the Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University and writes the monthly [Smoke Signals](#) column for the *Washington Post*.

We observe on our website that, "since our Patrons represent both Carolinas, Georgia and the Deep South, Kentucky, Memphis, Texas, Kansas City, and elsewhere

– some twelve states and the District of Columbia – they don't agree about much, but all understand that Real Barbecue is cooked with wood smoke.”

Make that *fourteen* states.

### **True ‘Cue in the News**

Many writers have mentioned the Campaign recently, most while commenting on Calvin Trillin’s *New Yorker* article, “[In Defense of the True ‘Cue.](#)” One of our favorites was a post by Jenna Mason in the “[What We’re Reading](#)” section of the Southern Foodways Alliance blog. Another worth reading is “[True ‘Cue Kerfuffle,](#)” by Patron **Daniel Vaughn**, about the defensive response of one restaurateur to Trillin’s article.

The Campaign also got shout-outs from new Patron **Jim Shahin** in his discerning survey of the Tar Heel State’s barbecue scene, “[Why North Carolina’s Barbecue Scene is Still Smoldering,](#)” in the *Washington Post*, and (naturally) in a post on NPR’s “The Salt” blog, titled “[Pitmasters Fan the Flames of All-Wood Barbecue](#)”.

Finally, a belated thank-you to Justin Bolois for mentioning us in “[The Most Underrated BBQ in North Carolina,](#)” on *FirstWeFeast.com*.

### **Vrai ‘Cue Français?**

Patron **Jim Shahin** writes about [The Beast](#), a new Texas-style barbecue place in Paris. Owner/operator Thomas Abramowicz, a native Parisian, apprenticed at Louie Mueller Barbecue in Taylor, Texas. “This whole part of American culinary culture, this is something that has a story, a tradition,” he says. “That’s why we embrace it. That, and the meat. The French don’t have smoked meats like this.” Asked how he cooks, Abramowicz replied, “All wood. I had to keep it real.”

Meanwhile, in the South (of France: Languedoc-Roussillon, to be precise) a Floridian is burning local oak, cherry, walnut, apple, and beech woods in an offset cooker custom built in Tuscaloosa to cook Texas-style barbecue using Mangalitsa pigs and Angus beef imported from Kansas. Expat Jed Thompson runs a *chef à domicile* ([catering](#)) operation and has founded the [Association Française de Barbecue](#) to offer barbecuing classes and to promote Kansas City Barbeque Society competitions.

### **Crime Wave**

Last October, in Austin, someone stole one of pitmaster John Mueller’s [barbecue pits](#). Three months later, in January, someone stole Raleigh chef Ashley Christensen’s [custom pig cooker](#). Needless to say, both pieces of apparatus were for cooking with wood. Who’d steal a gas cooker?

## Worth a Look

Patron **Daniel Vaughn** writes in *Texas Monthly* about Patron **Michael Twitty's** [reenactment](#) of nineteenth-century hole-in-the-ground barbecue practices. "As we stood around that fire we each tore off a bite of the finished pork and dipped it into the hot mop sauce. . . . The acidic tang took me back to my barbecue tour through the Carolinas. I expected that. What took longer to comprehend was that it was also transporting me back to the early days of Texas barbecue."

Michael Gebert's great documentary video on South Side Chicago barbecue, [Sky Full of Bacon 17: A Barbecue History of Chicago](#), offers many testimonials to Real Barbecue. Meathead Goldwyn of [AmazingRibs.com](#) remarks, for instance: "You can just tell meat that's been cooked over wood. It has such depth. The meat sings. You can taste the forest."

Colleen Rush gives us [7 Foolproof Ways to Spot a Fake BBQ Joint](#). "For every great barbecue restaurant," she observes, "there are approximately 200 bad ones plying customers with meat that has been baked, braised, boiled, and cloaked in a sickly-sweet sauce. *This is not barbecue*. This is what grade-school lunch ladies do to USDA 'Salisbury steak.'"

Robb Walsh has written an informative and amusing list of [7 Dirty Truths About BBQ \(That Nobody Wants to Talk About\)](#). Number four is "BBQ competitions are the new WWF fights."

When Fox News last July produced a list of "America's most influential BBQ pitmasters and personalities" (a "handful of people [who] have shaped American barbecue into what it is today"), it was simply bizarre that the list was whiter than the Oscars. Historically, of course, there has been a disproportionate black presence in the barbecue business. John T. Edge was quoted in the [BBC News Magazine](#) on one reason why: "An African-American . . . could literally dig a hole in the ground on the side of the road, lay on some bed springs, shovel in coals and start a business. [Barbecue] was the food truck of the 19th century."

Finally, an oldie but goodie from the [Los Angeles Times](#): In 2013 Jonathan Gold offered some pungent observations in on the "gentrification" of barbecue, with "spareribs and long-smoked brisket repositioned as totems of the artisanal food movement." Gold remarked: "Before, barbecue's visionaries were the cranky old dudes poking logs at 4 a.m. At the moment, they tend to be youngish bearded guys with Twitter accounts and a taste for craft beer."

## True 'Cue Kentucky and South Carolina

It has been a quiet couple of months for our Kentucky and South Carolina affiliates. Perhaps they're hibernating.

## True 'Cue North Carolina

In North Carolina, the Campaign has recently certified 100% wood-cookers [Captain Bob's BBQ & Seafood](#) in Hertford, [Buxton Hall](#) in Asheville, [Picnic](#) in Durham, and [Sam Jones BBQ](#) in Winterville. Captain Bob's has been around for a while, but the other three are new, as is [Southern Smoke BBQ](#) in Garland, mentioned in our last issue.

Sam Jones's place has received a lot of attention, because Sam is a scion of the Dennis/Jones barbecue dynasty, of the Skylight Inn in Ayden. Like Buxton Hall and Picnic (and unlike the Skylight Inn) Sam's place has craft beers on tap and an extensive menu, including ribs and smoked turkey. But the new place cooks old-school. As Sam Jones told [Garden & Gun](#): "Me cooking by any other means than my family has for all these years would be like – 'In other news, Billy Graham starts a Satanic church and Sam Jones is cooking with gas."

At this writing, plans are in place for a new place in Carrboro, to be called [CrossTies Barbecue](#), owned by a Culinary Institute of America grad and offering "authentic Carolina barbecue [shoulders] and a variety of smoked meats." Exactly how that barbecue will be cooked remains to be seen, but it's clear that hickory and apple wood will be involved.

Meanwhile, the **True 'Cue Challenge** still stands – 22 months and counting -- offering a "No Faux 'Cue" apron and a ball cap to the first person who can identify (1) any statute or regulation that forbids any North Carolina barbecue restaurant to cook with wood or charcoal, or (2) any official—federal, state, county, or municipal—who has made a North Carolina barbecue restaurant stop cooking with wood or charcoal, or who has forbidden one to start.