

SMOKING YOUR FIRST BRISKET

CHECKLIST

Brisket is notoriously difficult cut of meat to cook. Many amateur pit masters have turned a 10lb brisket into a hunk of beef jerky.

You shouldn't let these horror stories put you off though. There is no greater accomplishment than pulling a brisket off the BBQ after 10 hours tending to your fire.

To keep things simple we've distilled everything you need to know into 6 simple steps.

Sound good?

Follow the steps in this checklist and you'll be tucking into restaurant quality brisket in no time.

THE 6 STEP PROCESS FOR PERFECT BRISKET

- 1 Choosing and trimming your brisket
- 2 Apply the rub
- 3 Fire up your smoker
- 4 Smoking your brisket
- 5 Wrapping your brisket and dealing with the dreaded stall
- 6 Resting and slicing your brisket

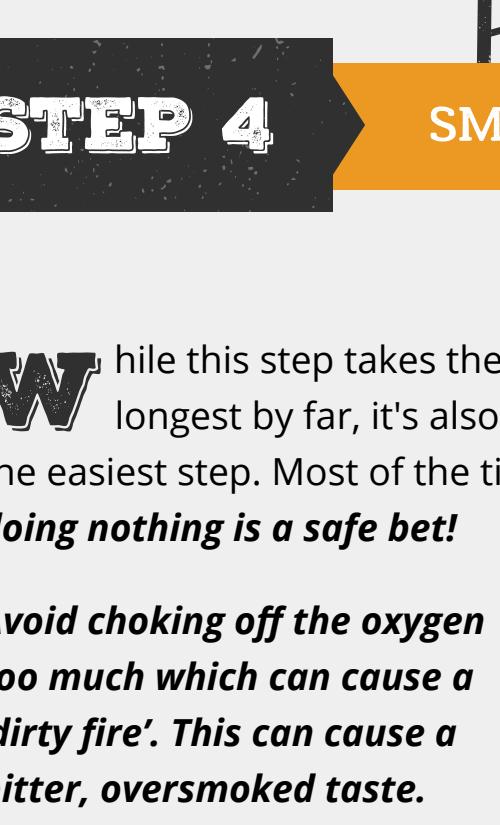
STEP 1

CHOOSING AND TRIMMING YOUR BRISKET

The problem most people have with brisket is that it's a tough cut of meat. This makes it perfect for low & slow cooking.

When selecting your brisket look for marbling and a thick flat so the leaner part will cook at almost the same rate as the larger point.

So long as you leave around 1/4" of fat and get a good shape don't worry too much about trimming. Practice makes perfect.



TRIMMING GUIDELINES

- Use a good **narrow curved boning knife** for trimming the brisket.
- If you don't trim any fat off the brisket it will taste too fatty, but trimming too much will make your brisket dry. **Aim for around 1/4" of fat.**
- Brisket is much easier to trim **when it's still cold** so trim it right after you take it out of the fridge.
- There is a thick membrane called the deckle that will not render out during cooking which you need **to cut out**.
- Trim off any bits which are significantly **thinner than the rest** as they will cook too fast and burn.
- Think about **where the heat will be coming from** and how the brisket will be placed on your cooking surface. Areas that run hotter can have a little more fat to help protect the meat.

STEP 2

APPLYING THE RUB

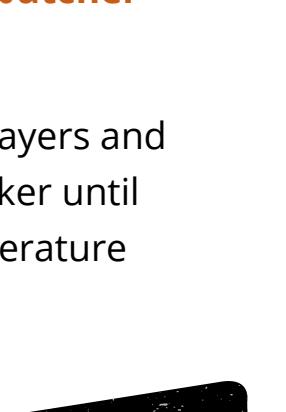
A lot of people use complicated rubs with chilli powder, cumin and paprika on their brisket. **For beginners it's always safe to start with texas style and use only salt and pepper.**

At this point some people let the brisket warm up to room temperature for an hour before putting it on the smoker.

Others argue that putting the brisket on cold helps it develop a better smoke ring. So feel free to experiment here.

USING A RUB

- For a basic Texas rub **use even parts salt & black pepper.**
- **Invest in a rub shaker** and use it to apply home made or store bought rubs and easily get an even coat on your brisket.
- The biggest mistake people make is putting on **too much rub**. You want to be conservative with the rub so that the meat flavor stands out.



STEP 3

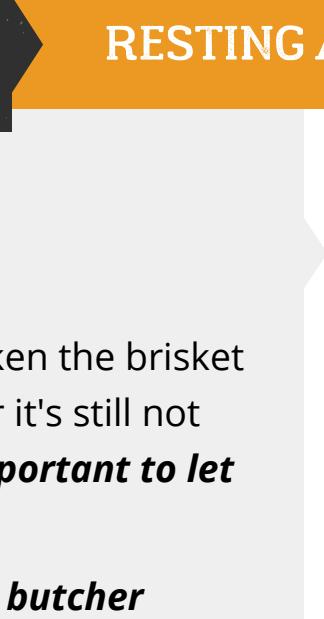
FIRE UP YOUR SMOKER

Getting your smoker setup correctly and placing your brisket will help ensure it cooks evenly and develops a rich bark and smoke ring.

Get your smoker to a stable temperature between 225 - 250°F

A good rule of thumb for working out how long it's going to take to cook is 1 hour - 1 hour and 15 minutes per LB of brisket at 250°F.

Every brisket is different though.



POSITIONING YOUR BRISKET ON THE SMOKER

- Place the brisket on the smoker **fat side up**.
- Depending on your smoker, **if the heat is coming from below**, consider smoking fat-side down to protect the muscle from drying out too much.
- Place the **fattier point** of the brisket closer to the fire. The extra fat will help insulate it.
- **The flat end** of the brisket should be closer to the smoke stack.
- Always **use a water pan** to help keep moisture in the cooking chamber and avoid burning.

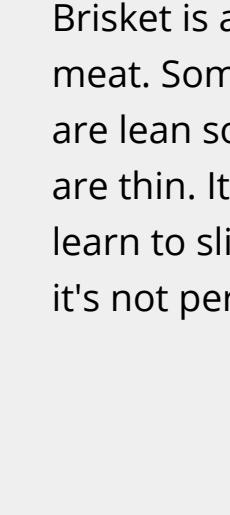
STEP 4

SMOKING YOUR BRISKET

While this step takes the longest by far, it's also the easiest step. Most of the time **doing nothing is a safe bet!**

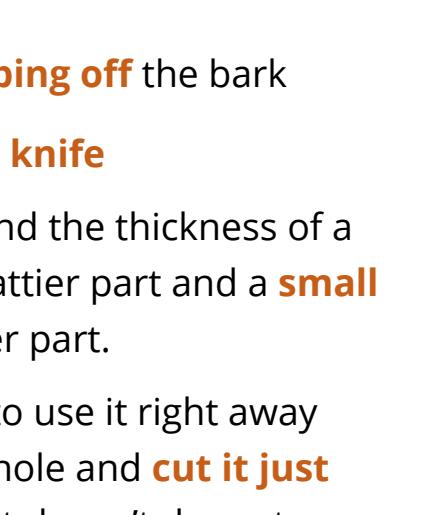
Avoid choking off the oxygen too much which can cause a 'dirty fire'. This can cause a bitter, oversmoked taste.

Use a dry wood like hickory, apple, oak or pecan. Avoid green wood or overly cured wood.



WHAT TO DO WHILE YOUR BRISKET IS COOKING

- You need to **keep a close watch** on the fire and keep the temperature steady.
- You want to see **clean heat coming out** of the smoker and not a lot of smoke.
- When the lid of the smoker is open you're losing heat and smoke and it's going to take awhile to recover the heat. **"If you're looking you ain't cooking"**
- So aim to **check it as little as possible**, and if it's looking dry consider using a spray bottle with some apple juice or apple cider vinegar.



STEP 5

WRAPPING YOUR BRISKET AND DEALING WITH THE DREADED STALL

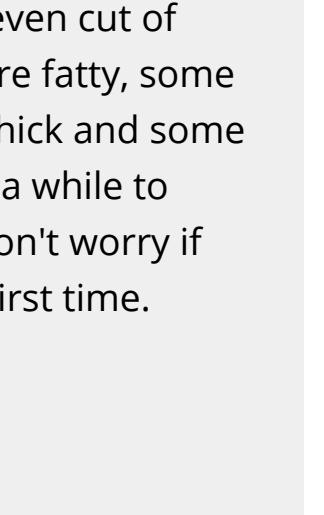
To wrap or not to wrap, that is the question. Wrapping in foil is a controversial topic that can lead to fights. You can wrap the brisket after around 4-6 hours or you can cook for 11 or 12 hours and never need to wrap.

✓ **It can help accelerate the cook time if your guests are getting impatient.**

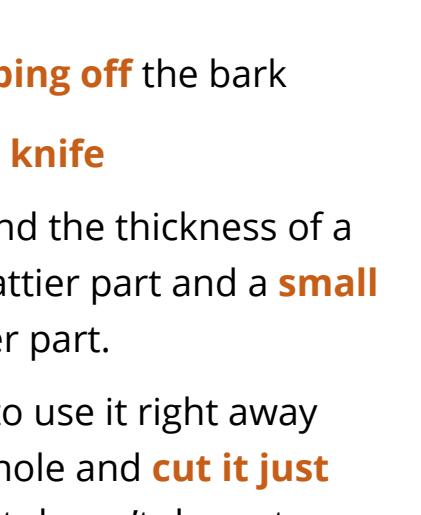
✓ **It can help to retain moisture and cook faster.**

✓ **If the meat has taken on too much smoke wrapping can prevent it getting too bitter.**

Wrapping can also damage the bark on your brisket.



- When the internal temperature of your brisket hits around **160°F -170°F** the temperature can stall as the brisket tightens up and squeezes out moisture.
- Carefully remove the brisket and place it on a large **sheet of foil or butcher paper**.
- Wrap it up tight using two layers and then add back to your smoker until it reaches an internal temperature of **185-195°F**.
- At this point you might want to **start cooking your BBQ sauce and sides.**



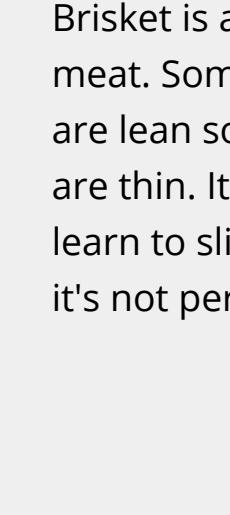
STEP 6

RESTING AND SLICING YOUR BRISKET

Once you've taken the brisket off the cooker it's still not ready to eat. **It's important to let it rest.**

Wrap the brisket in butcher paper or foil and then a towel and leave it in a cooler for at least one hour but up to 4 is fine.

Brisket is a very uneven cut of meat. Some parts are fatty, some are lean some are thick and some are thin. It can take a while to learn to slice it so don't worry if it's not perfect the first time.



SLICING YOUR BRISKET

- Once you've taken the brisket off the cooker and **let it rest for about an hour** you are ready to slice.
- Cut the **against the grain** on the flat side until you get to the point. And then turn the brisket 90 degrees and then cut against the grain.
- Try and **avoid scraping off** the bark
- **Use a 12" serrated knife**
- Cut each slice around the thickness of a **big pencil** on the fattier part and a **small pencil** on the leaner part.
- If you're not going to use it right away leave the brisket whole and **cut it just before serving** so it doesn't dry out.

