

Brisket Rub for a 6-lb brisket

Some Texas pit bosses swear the only seasonings needed for a perfect brisket are salt and pepper. They let the flavor of oak or hickory smoke carry the day. But usually some sort of spice mix is rubbed into the meat prior to cooking to add zest. Make it more or less piquant, more or less herby, according to your tastes. Mix all of the ingredients in a bowl:

- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon coarse salt
- 1 tablespoon dark brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons black pepper
- 2 teaspoons garlic salt
- 2 teaspoons onion powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano

Brisket Mop

You can go wild with ingredients for your mop liquid: onion, celery, bay leaf, green pepper, lemon juice, sesame oil, soy sauce. The possibilities are endless. But I figure there's already plenty of flavor in the spice rub. I just use the mop to keep the meat moist. And rather than trying to mop the liquid onto the meat, I opt for a small spray bottle. It's just as fast and less messy. Mix liquids and pour into a spray bottle:

- ½ cup cider vinegar
- 1 cup lager-style beer

Simple Barbecue Sauce

There is no correct barbecue sauce for smoked brisket, only endless variations and debate. Some traditional meat markets, such as Kreutz Market in Lockhart, regarded by some as the epicenter of Texas barbeque, consider sauce an abomination and refuse to serve it. Elsewhere, the sauce recipe is a closely guarded secret, passed from generation to generation. I happen to like an extra bit of lubrication on my brisket sandwich, and I don't get too carried away in the preparation: just a bit of sweet and tangy with some smoky undertones. You may have all of the ingredients already in your pantry. Mix all of the ingredients together. Serve in a bowl with a spoon:

- 2 cups ketchup
- ¼ cup cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons dark molasses
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon dried cumin
- freshly ground black pepper to taste

I would set control to 225° and use about 3 bowls of hickory chips; put meat thermometer in the thickest part of the brisket and cook it till 170°, foil if needed and continue cooking till 190° internal. Wrap in foil and then towels or blankets, put in warm cooler and let rest for at least 1 hour. Open carefully and enjoy.

190-200° is too high for brisket. 190° is the upper end range. I find brisket is best in the high 180°s. More than that and muscle fibers start to squeeze out that lovely juice. 200° in my opinion, is too low for smoking brisket. I'd shoot more for around 230°-240°. Some folks on the BBQ circuit do high heat brisket cooks. Some of them are winning, but the majority of folks - and the way it's been done for many many years is low and slow. Not as low as 200° - when I couldn't get my smokers up to 225° I've found the end result to be a bit drier.

Last, to the chagrin of some die hards in some remote village in Texas, I'd employ the use of foil. ESPECIALLY when doing a small cut. Take it up to the 160° range before you put it in foil. Then foil it, put it back on the smoker, and keep going until you get to a few degrees shy of 190°.