

Dear Friends of IBBQA:

Barbecue is alive and doing well in Illinois and across our great country. A recent article on BBQ in Sunday's Parade magazine "Holy Smokes! The New Golden Age of Barbecue" (<http://www.parade.com/55073/johntedge/holy-smokes-the-new-golden-age-of-barbecue/>) talks about barbecue being in its golden age. New barbecue places keep opening in Chicagoland, Illinois and across the country.

More and more barbecue programs (and reruns) are showing up on television and two of my best friends have their own shows. Diva Q is the star of BBQ Crawl (<http://www.travelchannel.com/tv-shows/bbq-crawl>) is now airing on the Travel Channel and The Orrisons get their own show, The Shed which premieres Aug 5th at 9PM.

Competition cooks are alive and doing well in Illinois Scottie from Cancer Sucks and Mike from Quau are names I still see popping up all the time but there are plenty of new guys getting calls and having success Then there is the IBBQA! I went to the three latest IBBQA events we had and enjoyed them all. I made new friends along the way and ate some great Q.

I also had a great time driving to the NBBQA convention with Barry and Meathead. I made a point of visiting eleven barbecue places in 2013 including Big Bob Gibsons, Melissa Cookstons' Memphis Barbecue Company, Pat Martins place in Tennessee and a great little dive in Alabama named Archabald and Woodsen (a better dive I have not been to, everything was well above average). I made the time to drive down to Memphis in May this year and saw our friend Mark Lambert of Sweet Swine o Mine win a Grand Championship with his whole pork shoulder Lastly, it was a great honor to have Denny Mike from Maine, Famous Dave of Hayward, Paul Mackey from Awsum Aussie's Barbecue and of course, the eight Shed Heads from The Shed visit me in our restaurants

2013 is a little over half way over and I know that many of us have had lots of great things that have happened. I have more I could talk to my friends about and that should be a big part of what we do with IBBQA. I want to share each others successes and stories with you. I see my friends success as my success and their problems as my problems and I know many that feel that way about me and our whole barbecue family

Please know that I continue to appreciate your support of IBBQA. Sharing BBQ with you so we can dos some good and have a really good excuse to get together is what this is all about.

Thanks for taking the time to read.

Dave Raymond aka Sweet Baby Ray