



The Prophets of Smoked Meat: A Journey Through Texas Barbecue

Daniel Vaughn , Nicholas McWhirter (Photographer)

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The debut title in the Anthony Bourdain Books line, *The Prophets of Smoked Meat* by “Barbecue Snob” Daniel Vaughn, author of the enormously popular blog Full Custom Gospel BBQ, is a rollicking journey through the heart of Texas Barbecue.

From brisket to ribs, beef to pork, mesquite to oak, this fully illustrated, comprehensive guide to Texas barbecue includes pit masters’ recipes, tales of the road—from country meat markets to roadside stands, sumptuous photography, and a panoramic look at the Lone Star State, where smoked meat is sacred.

The Prophets of Smoked Meat: A Journey Through Texas Barbecue Details

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Kristi says

First off, and this probably goes without saying, do not read this book while hungry. It is just a bad idea. Also, don't read this book before or after eating something you're only just "meh" about, as it will do nothing to help your mood. I wasn't sure how much I would actually enjoy reading about someone else's journey through the great state of Texas while eating mass amounts of BBQ, but this is actually a really fun book. There is quite a bit of repetition as Vaughn goes from restaurant to restaurant saying what was good, bad, or maybe even mediocre about what they had to offer, but it was actually never boring while reading it. Each chapter deals with a certain section of the state, which works out well considering that Texas is slightly larger than the entire country of France. I got the chance to root for my favorite places and cities, and also make serious notes about the places I want to try myself. It isn't just a book about Texas BBQ, but also the joy of the road trip, and the diverse population that calls this great state home.

Rory says

If Anthony Bourdain only published this for the photos, I understand, but besides learning about the basics of barbecue, as well as bark, the text made this a very boring book. Texas barbecue deserves better, and it has had better. This isn't it.

Cade says

I really appreciated the bluntness of Vaughn's reviews. If the BBQ was bad, he didn't pull any punches, regardless of the establishment. For me, that really builds the credibility of the accolades when he hands them out. He is certainly a BBQ aficionado. After eating at Gatlin's, a place he recommends in Houston, my BBQ meter has been re-calibrated, and I understand how good BBQ can be. My previous level of Good, is what Vaughn would consider "Passable". Ignorance was bliss.

There are several criticisms regarding the physical size and layout of the book, such as the butcher paper toned pages. I agree that these can be distracting, but I kind of liked the tone of the pages by the end of the book. Also, I would have liked to have seen more of the photography featured in the book. Lots of talk about the photography, not much display. Please reference the age-old saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words." He mentions the photography book of work, "Texas BBQ" by Wyatt McSpadden, and it would be an excellent companion piece to this book, featuring some amazing photographs of places reviewed.

I will admit that the writing can seem a bit repetitious as well, but it is BBQ. When you are writing about about looking for the best brisket in Texas, you have to try the brisket at every BBQ joint; therefore, every review is probably going to mention the brisket. That all being stated, I really did like the book. I was fascinated by the scale of the entire endeavor. While not taken in one grand trip, the feat of sampling 186 BBQ joints across the state in only 35 days (over 5 per day) seems more than daunting. When you factor in the scale of the State of Texas and realize that it took more than 10,300 miles of driving, the task seems Herculean. I have ambitions of hitting the BBQ trail and discovering some of what Texas has to offer. This

book has made me realize that it will be very important to get to the places early and to be prepared to wait. It also has helped narrow down the options (a little). Then again, the hole-in-the-wall joint in the off the path town could be terrible, or it could be BBQ bliss waiting to be discovered, so it doesn't narrow the search, it just adds a couple of places to the 'bucket-list'.

Janie says

Vaughn, Daniel & Nicholas McWhirter (photogs.). *The Prophets of Smoked Meat: A Journey Through Texas Barbecue*. Ecco: HarperCollins. 2013. 384p. bibliog. index. ISBN 9780062202925. \$29.99; ebk. ISBN 9780062202956. HOME ECON

This exploration of barbecue by Texas Monthly magazine barbecue editor Vaughn reads more like a love story than a cookbook. With a restaurant guide and collective bibliographies of the who's who of pit masters and some of their secret recipes, Vaughn's homage to smoked meat is full of cadence, and the accompanying photos are so luscious and seductive they will tempt even the least likely fan of smoky brisket, pulled pork, beef sausage, and ribs. In this first book in Ecco's Anthony Bourdain series, Vaughn describes place by place the fare he encountered as he traveled throughout the state. According to the author, there are four major types of barbecue: East Country (smoky with sauce), Hill Country (cowboy style), South Texas (barbacoa, or whole cow heads cooked in pits), and Central Texas (rubs and indirect heat). Whether readers are looking to replicate these techniques, experiment with different woods, or take a trip to Texas for themselves, this book is likely to be the closest thing most will have to visiting the mecca of meat in person.

Verdict A great gift for the barbecue enthusiast and a gorgeous book for display.—Jane Hebert, Glenside P.L. Dist., Glendale Heights, IL

Robsy says

Fun book for the summer. I especially enjoyed the road trip aspect. Being at least a fifth generation Texan it was enjoyable to be immersed in traditional, old-school Texas culture. Got to catch up on some places I ate as a kid. Learned about some great places to try and chuckled at the horror show that is (most, not all) east Texas BBQ. Owners microwaving their meat was especially hurtful to read. I mean, c'mon! Effort, people, effort.

I think a few got short sheeted when he visited right before closing. The meat won't be on its best behavior that late in the game. If he only has time to visit once, it seems a bit arbitrary to hit a joint in the evening because of where it falls on your tour. He certainly said as much, but still, for it to be put in print for the world to see is tough. I am looking forward to seeing when he revisits these places to see if there is redemption. Nothing better than a redemption tale.

And the stand outs are truly that good. Franklin is otherworldly. Louie Mueller, Snow's, Pecan Lodge, Lockhart "rib jam" Smokehouse. Truly some of the best food in the country.

Mark Wright says

A really good read if you're a big fan of barbecue. Probably not a major book for others--there's only so much casual readers will want to know about yet another BBQ stop. You definitely learn what Vaughn's preferences are for optimal doneness and amount of smoke for the different types of meat. Just looking at the pictures will likely make you hungry. Very skim-able with a decent index and good "Pitmaster Profiles", a Hall of Fame section. This would be a good book to have on hand if you ever find yourself in Texas, looking for recommendations on barbecue joints.

CW says

Having enjoyed Daniel Vaughn's barbecue blog for some time, I was excited to read this book. I enjoyed reading about the various barbecue joints in my home state and the barbecue road trips that Vaughn took with his friends. The pitmaster profiles and recipes from the pitmasters was a nice touch at the end of the book. I do wish that he would have had maps in each chapter that showed readers the routes he took on each trip. It would have also been nice to have captions under the photos, because I often wondered which barbecue joints the photos were taken. Despite these two faults, The Prophets of Smoked Meat is a good read for anyone that likes barbecue.

Kimberly says

I was hoping for some history, or cooking techniques mixed in with this book. There are a couple, but it's pretty much just: we drove to this place, I ate this, it was dry or moist.

There are some recipes at the end. I wish I could just buy a smaller book with those.

M says

Okay, the first thing you need to know about this book is that it contains a LOT of food. Meat, sides, meat, beers, roadside stands, milkshakes, meat ... there's food in every sentence. When I first picked it up, with the intention of reading it cover to cover, I had to put it down after about 10 pages. I felt over-full just looking at the pictures! But when we went on a 10-day road trip across Texas I brought it along and devoured every page and picture as we traveled. What a book! It was the single best resource on our road trip. Mr. Vaughn's writing steered us off the main highway and onto wonderful side trips, to delicious dives, and kooky corners of Texas. We ate the best BBQ we've ever had (Louie Mueller! Pecan Lodge!) and visited interesting landmarks (Dr. Pepper Museum! Cadillac Ranch!) Know anyone who lives in Texas or is planning a trip there? Buy this for them. Now.

Mark says

a narrative tour of 182 bbq restaurants, stands, and trucks throughout the state of texas. it's very thorough and engaging though somewhat bloggy in style and there aren't really that many words to describe eating approximately the same meal 180 times. the inset sections are particularly useful, giving history, detail, or anecdote in support of other details. extra bonus in the tips and tricks from top pitmasters in the last section.

i've only been to maybe 5 or 6 of the places listed here, as well as a few more they don't deign to visit. next time i'm traveling around the state i'm certainly going to up that number.

Morgan says

A series of extremely well-written and well-photographed Yelp reviews.

Didi says

Don't expect any recipes for great Texas BBQ in this book. It is a story of a journey to find the best BBQ joints in Texas.

The story to be honest was flat. If you get bored easily, you might drop off midway. However, its merit lies on how it gives you nuggets of Texas history and culture and nuggets of the secrets on how to make the best BBQ.

I hate the size of the book, large and unwieldy like the state of Texas I suppose. It could've been printed in a smaller size. Oh and I would've loved to have read headings for the photos to identify which pitmaster, which BBQ joint, which BBQ dishes, etc were on the photo.

Shulan Xiao says

I expected a lot of interviews with pitmasters, old-timers and the like but it seems that at most places the guy who knew what he was doing is long <http://www.cardecalsus.com/tech-2-flash> dead and the current owners are relatively hapless. There is little here in the way of secrets, recipes, behind the scenes knowledge, or classic stories and legends. And apparently a shocking number of the places they stopped closed down shortly thereafter.

James says

It might seem obvious, but my rating is for the "whole package" rather than just the words themselves. While the travelogue and descriptions of BBQs both good and bad only go so far and can get repetitive, the photos and book design take this up a notch and make the photos of even "subpar" meals look drool-worthy, and the

sidebars detailing some of the science and specifics of both meats and processes are informative and interesting.

Now someone get me some meat...

Bryan says

I grabbed this without really looking at it and didn't realize it was simply a list of barbecue joints that Daniel Vaughn, the barbecue editor of Texas Monthly, has encountered on his Texas travels, with a brief review of each (sometimes exceedingly brief for the crappy ones). There's essentially no narrative, which sort of makes it difficult to read through in a sitting. The real problem, though, is that Texas barbecue joints are so ephemeral that Vaughn himself acknowledges the book was out of date before it was written, much less published. Still potentially worth it if you live in Texas as a sort of overview of the smoked meat scene. I've got a few places added to the list of joints to try, but in general you'd do better just reading the magazine column.
