

# Epicurean Episodes

## Bar-B-Que Tasting At Home With Jerome's, Lombardi's and Pack Jack's

**T**HE DINING DETECTIVES DECIDED TO TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT! We always "dine out" for our reviews but realized that we also enjoy "take out" food at home on a regular basis. So, the offer to try food from three of the best local BBQ restaurants was too tempting to pass up. We invited 15 Petaluma Post contributors and friends and picked up food from Lombardi's and Jerome's in Petaluma and Pack Jack's in Sebastopol. Then two other stops added to the BBQ Tasting—wines from a great local wine shop Vino on North McDowell and a cake from one of the best local bakeries, Joe's A-1 Bakery Downtown on Petaluma Blvd.

As we arrived with the food there were 10 hungry people pacing and hovering like vultures. We had to "back them off" so we could set up and take photos. The aromas made this even tougher to resist digging in. After a few minutes of photographs, we were ready! A menu for each restaurant was placed in front of their offerings, so our Dining Detectives assistants knew where each dish came from. We also handed out forms to be completed with their comments and thoughts on each item they tried.

BBQ is a National Pastime. We learn early in life that there's nothing like a hot dog or hamburger from a grill. Our tastes mature as we age and find out about ribs, chicken, tri-tip, pork and lamb. What you like best is usually a product of your upbringing. That's not to say that we stop learning as we taste new foods but, in reality, if you loved sweet or spicy BBQ sauce as a kid, then it's what you like now. Those who grew up with Texas Style smoked BBQ are hooked forever. You don't get Sonoma Lamb everywhere so California style could be your favorite.

Jerome's Mesquite Style BBQ is Texas Style as per new owner Brian Kaplowitz. Jerome's has been a successful restaurant for 18 years. The food we tasted included BBQ Pulled Pork, BBQ Ribs, sliced beef Tri-Tip and potato salad.

Jerome's BBQ Pulled Pork was a crowd pleaser:

"Best Pork this side of Texas."

"Simply Fabulous!"

"Can't wait to go for lunch and have a sandwich."

Jerome's BBQ Ribs had a terrific sauce:

"Their sweetness was my weak-

ness."

"Tender and Juicy."

"Cooked to perfection, not a lick of fat."

"Sweet and just right."

Jerome's potato salad was also a big hit:

"It had a nice creamy texture."

"One of the best side dishes in recent years."

Lombardi's Gourmet BBQ is California Style. Owner Lee Lombardi has been open for 3 years now and Tony, Scott and others cook out front producing some of the finest BBQ using a unique homemade sauce. We enjoyed watching Tony Hauth, the manager, cook ours to order. He had each of the following on separate grills: BBQ Ribs, BBQ Chicken, BBQ Lamb and BBQ Tri-Tip.

"The sauce tasted homemade and was quite unique."

"The BBQ Ribs were terrific."

"Fresh and juicy ribs."

"The chicken had delicate spices and was quite juicy."

"Moist chicken without much sauce was great."

"Great herbs, subtle flavors, Italian style."

Pedroni's potato salad got these raves:

"Now we see what all the fuss is about, Delish!"

"Superior, great side dish. Everything was so fresh!"

Pack Jack's Old-Style BBQ in Sebastopol has been open for 20 years. This is Old Style Texas BBQ which means smoked. The owners, Donnie and Marie Harris, use old family recipes which were handed down to them. "Slow-cooked" in real brick ovens, using premium seasoned oak wood gives that authentic, old fashioned, smoke-flavor goodness. We were treated to their famous Smoked Pork Ribs, Homemade Hot Links, Smoked Chicken and Pack Jack Beans. Slow cooking is a fantastic way to BBQ and Pack Jack's has been getting rave reviews for years.

"The way Ribs should taste."

"Best Ribs we've ever had."

"Hot Links with a kick."

"Chicken breasts that melted in your mouth, cooked to sheer perfection."

"Smoky tasting, can't beat it."

"Sweetest beans went great with the chicken."

We stopped at Vino Premium Wine Shop on N. McDowell and picked up 2 wines that we really

liked. The 1999 Pepi Two-Heart Canopy Sauvignon Blanc from Oakville were great choices to go with the BBQ especially with the Hot Spicy Links and Sonoma Lamb. The 2000 White Oak Sauvignon Blanc paired well with the sweeter Pulled Pork and Tri-Tip. Some of our tasters also brought wines which included a great 1997 BV Rutherford Cabernet Sauvignon. This was terrific and paired well with the BBQ Chicken and Ribs. This wine is built more like a French wine, more earthy and less fruity flavor. The sleeper was the 1998 Charles Shaw Cabernet Sauvignon. This was a wonderful wine that paired well with the Tri-Tip.

Joe's A-1 Bakery was another stop that we're glad we made. We picked out a 4-Layer Chocolate Cake that was rich and delicious and quickly devoured.

The BBQ tasting was a tremendous success. There was plenty for all to taste and nobody went home hungry. We had lively discussions throughout the afternoon and nobody was shy about their preferences. Everyone submitted their comments and as you see, the results were all across the board. Our theory of "You like what you grew up with" was correct. Smokey, Sweet, Spicy in your youth corresponded to what was loved today.

Some of the most favored dishes were Lombardi's BBQ Sonoma Lamb, Jerome's BBQ Pulled Pork and Pack Jack's BBQ Pork Ribs. All three restaurants got high marks even from the finickiest. You can't go wrong with any so all three and let us know what you think.

## THE DINING DETECTIVES

BY CAROL & JOE DAVIS  
www.finediningdetectives.com



Jerome's Mesquite Style BBQ Tri-Tip.



Lombardi's Gourmet BBQ Ribs.



Pack Jack's Old-Style BBQ sampler.

**JEROME'S  
MESQUITE BBQ**  
1390 N McDowell Blvd.  
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