

The FBA Board of Directors has adopted some new definitions and guidelines for judging BBQ entries at sanctioned contests. Please review these carefully and apply them at all future contests whether cooking or judging.

Definitions of Taste and Tenderness

Taste; Taste should be pleasing and represent the meat that it is, because each meat has its own distinctive flavor; brisket should taste like beef etc. The spices, rubs or sauces used should be flavor balanced so that it only complements as opposed to overwhelms the meat presented. There should be no overpowering flavor of spices or sauce.

Tenderness; Avoid using any tenderness indicators that may have been viewed on Television BBQ shows and then shared in the judges' tent. Such as the fold test with brisket or that the bone will turn white after biting. These expectations are nonsense and have little to do with tenderness. Focus on the sample at hand and whether it has a pleasant eating experience. Keep in mind, you are judging what is presented as opposed to what you think should be presented.

Chicken: Sample the entry as presented. Leave the skin in place. Removing it will significantly alter the flavor and tenderness the pitmaster intended. Take a bite, there is no need to dissect it. The skin should bite through easily and the rest of the skin should still be in place. The chicken meat should release easily from the sample and should have a tender and pleasant mouth feel as well. If it is chewy, rubbery, or mushy/too soft it is either undercooked or overcooked. Tenderness should be based on mouth feel and the chewing experience.

Ribs: Your bite should be from the middle of the rib and deep enough that your teeth gently come in contact with the bone. *Avoid biting the bone but **bite to the bone**.* The meat should release cleanly and easily from the bone, and there should be a relatively clean outline of where your bite was removed from the rest of the meat. The rest of the rib meat should still be attached to the bone. The mouth feel and chew should be a pleasant experience.

Pork: Pork should be tender but mushy is unacceptable. If Medallions are presented take a bite to check for tenderness. There should be no tugging required. Medallions, chunks, pulled or sliced should have some body and maintain its integrity but at the same time easy to chew. Your taste senses will let you know if it was tender as opposed to mushy and unpleasant. If 'bark' is presented, and it is optional, there is a different guideline for tenderness. Bark is the dark crust on the exterior of the pork butt. It is acceptable for bark to be considerably more chewy than the interior meat. Good bark can be a chewy flavor bomb in your mouth. Understand what it is and how different it is than the interior meat. No entry should be judged down because the bark is chewy and has a concentration of flavor. On the other hand if you are unable to chew it and the flavor is bitter or too extreme, judge it accordingly.

Brisket: Brisket is typically presented as slices, burnt ends, pulled and chunked. The accepted standard thickness for slices is roughly that of a pencil thickness. You should be able to gently

pick up the slice from the box and it should stay together as one piece. It should be limp and hang mostly straight down when held by one end. A simple pull test can be an indicator for slice tenderness. Hold an end of the slice in each hand and gently pull until the slice parts. If it separates before you pull it is likely, too tender (over cooked). If it takes a more tugging it is likely a little too tough or (under cooked). Take a bite, and let your mouth decide. Your first mouth feel impression will guide you. Does it maintain its body and have a tender chew? Does it maintain its body and take a little longer or more effort to chew? If you have to pull the bite away from the slice with some effort, it is undercooked. The level of effort will determine the level of doneness.

Burnt ends are optional. If burnt ends are presented, they should be a tender, smoky and meaty bite size piece of the brisket. There is no size standard for burnt ends. Burnt ends come from the fattier part of the brisket and will be very juicy. The juiciness comes from intramuscular fat that is rendered down. They will be tender and offer little to no resistance when chewing. "Melt in your mouth" is desirable as opposed to mushy or tough. However if you feel unpleasant chunks or globs of un-melted fat in your mouth after chewing, those can be undesirable and be judged accordingly.

Remember you are judging what is presented, not what you think should be presented!