



65°
Overcast
H: 71° L: 61°
[Weather](#) | [Traffic](#)

my Sunday, February 15, 2015

Welcome to [mystatesman.com](#)

Hi, [JimBushnell](#) | [Sign Out](#)

Austin American-Statesman

- HOME
- METRO & STATE
- INVESTIGATIONS
- BUSINESS
- SPORTS
- AUSTIN360/LIFE
- OPINION
- VIDEO
- SHOPPING

WEATHER



Warm, chance for showers on Sunday in Central Texas

LOCAL

Fire in North Austin office building causes \$55k in damage

LOCAL

Man dies in rollover crash in Northeast Austin

▼ LATEST HEADLINES ▼

[HOME](#) / [NEWS](#) / [LOCAL](#)

Kelso: Texans know you don't have to wait hours in line for good BBQ

Resize text [A](#) | [A](#) | [A](#)

Posted: 3:29 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 7, 2015

9

463

7

499

By John Kelso

You newcomers to Austin: Did you know there are barbecue places in town other than Franklin Barbecue? Barbecue joints where you don't have to stand in line for two or three hours to get to the brisket?

Take [House Park Bar-B-Que](#), at 900 W. 12th St., just east of Lamar Boulevard. House Park has been smokin' it up since 1943, and it smells like it.



Joe Sullivan and his son Matt working at the House Park barbecue pit.

Joe Sullivan, who has owned the place for 34 years, says that after a student interviewed him, the teacher called up to check up on her work.

Resolve to **Know More** with the Statesman

SUNDAY + DIGITAL • \$1.50/WEEK

SUBSCRIBE ▶

advertisement

In this Section

[Fire in North Austin office building causes \\$55k in damage](#)

[Man dies in rollover crash in Northeast Austin](#)

[The Blotter: Man killed in hit-and-run in New Braunfels](#)

[Man in 20s STAR Flighted from crash on Texas 71](#)

Check out the meat grease. This pit, around ... [Read More](#)

“She said, ‘I know she interviewed

you because her stuff smelled like barbecue when she turned it in,’” Joe recalled.

“That’s our thing: If you don’t smell like it, you ain’t right,” said Matt Sullivan, Joe’s son and the handlebar mustache guy manning the pit these days.

Related Video



[The Best Barbecue in Austin](#)

The pit, ah yes, the pit: It is perhaps the greasiest barbecue pit in creation. The lid on this pit has more meat fat hanging on it than

Chris Christie. This pit has been fired up since House Park opened in 1943. This pit is so old that it qualifies for Social Security. Joe says it’s the oldest barbecue pit in Austin.

You’ll smell like a sausage link when you walk out the door, and the neighborhood dogs will try to jump in your car. Here’s the irony: Because of city regulations, a “No Smoking” sign is posted on the door to the pit room. It’s a bit late for that, right?

Matt and Joe admire what Aaron Franklin has done with his barbecue place on East 11th Street. [Franklin Barbecue](#) has become a Texas landmark, rubbing elbows with the San Antonio Riverwalk, Big Tex and the Cadillac Ranch. Drop by at lunch and people will be lined up like they’re hoping for Bruce Springsteen tickets.

- [Kelso: Luling barbecue, a humble entrant among the world’s best](#)

It would be interesting to

[Why Austin’s JW Marriott still stirs debate over economic incentives](#)

[Climber who fell on Gus Fruh Trail rescued](#)

[65-year-old man killed in hit-and-run in New Braunfels Friday night](#)

[Sunny Saturday, chance of rain on Sunday](#)

[Top local stories of the week](#)

[As festivals fill Zilker, will more events turn to other Austin parks?](#)

- [The best barbecue in Austin, according to Matthew Odam](#) know if more out-of-staters know

Austin as the capital of Texas or as the home of Franklin Barbecue.

Joe thinks people who wait in line for hours for barbecue have mutton for brains. "I thought that was a Texas IQ test, and they failed," Joe said. "Franklin is a good cat, and he deserves this stuff. But it's gettin' kind of old."

"In my opinion, no true Texan should wait in line for Texas barbecue," said Matt, who started running the business two years back. "But I'd be lying if I said I'm not envious."

I'm certainly no food critic for Saveur, but my taste buds tell me that Franklin, and [La Barbecue](#) at 902 E. Cesar Chavez St., have the best barbecue this side of the planet Zarcon. That said, there are plenty of [other barbecue spots in Austin](#) that are worth a try. And when it comes to true barbecue joint ambiance, House Park has Franklin and La Barbecue hammered flat.

The sign up on the pole out front claims you'll "Need No Teef to Eat My Beef." Having teeth, I can't verify if choppers are necessary. But the brisket is tender, the ribs are spicy and tasty, and the walls inside are covered up in Austin memorabilia.

And every so often Karl Rove, the GOP guru, drops in for lunch, Matt says. "Even Republicans have to eat," Matt says. Who knew?

The little restaurant is a family affair. Son Matt started helping out around the place when he was learning his ABCs at nearby Pease Elementary School. "They'd say, 'Matt, don't go. You've got to stay in child care,' but I'd jump the fence and come down here to see my dad," he said. "I was pretty much born in that pit."

Joe bought the business in 1981 for \$22,000. At the time he had only \$100. So he borrowed \$15,000 from his brother, who he calls "Mike the Genius." (All four of Joe's brother were, or are, Austin firemen.) Then Joe paid off the rest of the \$7,000 at 10 percent interest.

Joe said he figured that was a heckuva deal: "Interest rates back then were higher than Charlie Sheen."

Still, Joe probably wondered what he had gotten himself into, since his first day of business coincided with the horrific 1981 Memorial Day weekend flood. It was a great time to own a boat, not a barbecue joint. Thirteen people drowned. Torrential rains increased Shoal Creek's flow rate from 90 gallons a minute to 6 million gallons a minute.

Shoal Creek is a rock's toss from House Park's pit.

"The Memorial Day flood was my first day, and I had water up to my ankles," Joe said. So he didn't open the doors, although he did sell barbecue. "We made \$900 in the parking lot in less than a day."

So if you people over at Franklin get sick of standing in line, check out House Park. Not only will you get something to eat. You'll see a chunk of Austin history along with your lunch.

PREVIOUS: **NATIONAL**

'Serial' podcast subject Adnan Syed grante...

NEXT: **LOCAL**

After crash, South I-35 back open near Ru...

By Andrew McLemore - American-Statesman Staff

Popular on MyStatesman.com

- [Urban development firm aims to help shape Austin's growth](#)
- [Waco VA center has produced modest research, made dubious claims](#)
- [Science and tech museum planned for Cedar Park](#)
- [Synagogue saga: B'nai Abraham's most excellent road trip](#)
- [District attorneys' system for tracking untrustworthy cops...](#)

[All Comments \(9\)](#)[Post a Comment](#)

Comment(s) 1-9 of 9**austexgrl**[Report](#)

Live Oak (deep in East Austin, 'specially on Saturday afternoons!!!..... La Barbecue, House BBQ, Stiles Switch, Mickelthwait in East Austin..... all right here in Austin... of Course.. Franklins is still the best, and now... lines not so long..... Long Llive Austin BBQ.. Be Proud Folks!!

7:31 p.m. Feb. 7, 2015

**alanofaustin**[Report](#)

Artz Rib House still has the best BBQ in Austin. It may of closed a few years ago, but it was sooo good that I can still taste it. Thanks ARTZ for the good food, music and memories.....texas forever!?!

10:48 p.m. Feb. 7, 2015

**rastifer**[Report](#)

Don's BBQ out on E. MLK, toward 969. Been there for years, great place to go for lunch on Sundays after church.

11:15 p.m. Feb. 7, 2015

**rastifer**[Report](#)

My dad used to say you could tell a good bbq joint if when you went around back, the grills looked like they hadn't been cleaned in 20 years. It meant all their brisket was steeped in the essence of a thousand steers. And the health inspectors were smart enough to look the other way.

11:18 p.m. Feb. 7, 2015

**Jennmcb**[Report](#)

Don's on 969 used to be good, as it was an affordable place to get a decent bbq lunch. Then they raised the prices drastically, and the meat quality has either worsened, or just can't compare to all of the goodies in Austin now. Either way, they aren't worth the trouble.

Kerlin on CC has some good stuff, as does John Mueller Meat Company on 6th. Blue Ox has above average que, and Micklethwait can be awesome some days. I love que, but waiting in lines is getting really old. We tried hitting Louie Mueller as we passed through Taylor yesterday, and the line was at least an hour-deep. That is just crazy. Yeah, the cooks/owners feel like celebrities, but instead of walking around hob-knobbing with customers(ahem, Wayne Mueller), find a way to get people in and out of your restaurant without blowing half a weekend. Needless to say we moved down the road and took our money elsewhere.

6:54 a.m. Feb. 8, 2015



Caltexchip

[Report](#)

THX Kelso! I just moved back to Austin from 25yr in CA and BBQ was one of the reasons. Had Franklin on list, but dreaded the line. Hit La- and Black's and felt Franklin's probably had too much fad sauce on it to beat them. It can wait for me rather than me for it. Now I know of House Park only a football field away! Sounds like I'll become a regular!

8:55 a.m. Feb. 8, 2015



Praxis

[Report](#)

County Line, Great Food and the ambiance can't be beat.

9:17 a.m. Feb. 8, 2015



mattprostko

[Report](#)

Great article on a deserving spot. @houseparkbbq is my "insider" favorite that I take people from out of town to. Just don't tell TOO many folks. Awesome.

9:52 a.m. Feb. 8, 2015



westlaker

[Report](#)

This is the fist Kelso column I have ever liked.

7:04 p.m. Feb. 8, 2015

Comment(s) 1-9 of 9

All Comments (9)	Post a Comment
----------------------------------	--------------------------------

WHO GOT BOOKED IN TRAVIS COUNTY?

View the 200 most-recent mugshots.

advertisement



Read Today's Paper Online

Still like to read the newspaper in the familiar page-by-page format? Great news! Digital versions of today's paper are available on your computer or tablet. And it's included in your subscription.

[Learn More](#)

[Read](#)



We're Listening

We hope you're enjoying MyStatesman.com, our premium website exclusively for subscribers. Please tell us what you like and what we can do to make it even better by completing a brief survey.

[Take The Survey](#)