

THE GREAT BARBECUE CRAWL

I'm on a mission to visit all 50 states and I'm getting fairly close. So when a family wedding brought us out of the comfort of our Brooklyn home into the backcountry of Arkansas, I saw an opportunity to scratch off a few states on my list. I convinced my husband that a road trip would be a great idea with the selling point being a barbecue crawl through the south. After all, what is the point of a road trip if you can't eat all of the delicacies of the region?



We started in Nashville where there were ample opportunities for barbecue, but we settled on Haddie B's Hot Chicken to

grease our stomachs in preparation of all the pork to come. There are six levels of heat from which to choose. We got medium for fear of indigestion, but we could have gone one or two levels higher in retrospect. A side of waffles, fried pickles and mac and cheese fortified us for the four country music bars we visited, ending at Johnny Cash's Bar and BBQ where a nine-month pregnant woman sang a respectable cover of "Shallow."



Next stop was Memphis, which was surprisingly quiet downtown. It was mid-week and off-season, but we expected a bit more action. A friend insisted we check out Rendezvous for their dry-rub ribs. It's in a back alley a few blocks off the main drag. I have to say, although I liked their sauces, the ribs seemed as if they had been hanging around a few hours too long.



En route to Arkansas, we stopped in at Whole Hog. It was here that I hoped to answer that eternal question – which is better, dry or wet rub ribs?



After sampling both, I've come to the conclusion that it must be a personal preference. For me, it's definitely a wet rub.



Our final destination was Chicago to visit more family, so that gave us an opportunity to knock off Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri with of course, a stop at Arthur Bryant's in Kansas City for the ultimate taste test.



By this point in the trip, I could barely zip my pants, but that didn't stop me from ordering a half-rack with tons of sides. And I so wanted to just taste the burnt ends that the guy behind the country gave me a small bowl to sample. It was a good thing I asked, because, by far, the burnt ends were the best barbecue of the trip.

So now, that just leaves seven more states for me to visit. Next trip I can knock off four – North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Wyoming. If you've got any good recommendations eating wise, send them my way! And it doesn't have to be barbecue—I'm an equal opportunity eater.