

WOOD PELLET SMOKER TEMPERATURE & HARDWOOD GUIDE

PITMASTER COMPENDIUM | SMOKER TEMPS, PULL TARGETS, HARDWOOD PAIRINGS & THE STALL

HICKORY	APPLE	PECAN	MESQUITE	CHERRY	OAK
Bold, bacon-like Best: Pork, Ribs, Beef	Mild, sweet fruity Best: Poultry, Pork, Ham	Nutty, mellow sweet Best: Chicken, Ribs, Fish	Intense, Texas earthy Best: Brisket, Beef Ribs	Sweet, mahogany bark Best: Poultry, Pork, Salmon	Medium, universal clean Best: All Meats / Tri-Tip

BARBECUE SMOKING TEMPERATURES, DURATION & INTERNAL PULL TARGETS				
Meat Cut / Recipe	Smoker Temp	Estimated Cook Time	Target Pull Temp	Wood Pairing & Technique
Whole Beef Brisket (Packer)	225°F (107°C)	1.25 - 1.5 hrs per lb	203°F - 205°F (Probe tender)	Oak / Hickory / Mesquite Texas Crutch wrap at 165°F
Pork Shoulder / Boston Butt	225°F - 250°F	1.5 - 2.0 hrs per lb	203°F - 205°F (Bone slides)	Hickory / Apple Spritz apple cider vinegar every 45 min
Pork Spare Ribs (3-2-1 Method)	225°F (107°C)	6 Hours (3-2-1)	195°F - 200°F (Bend test)	Apple / Pecan 3 hr bare, 2 hr foil wrapped, 1 hr sauce glaze
Baby Back Ribs (2-2-1 Method)	225°F (107°C)	5 Hours (2-2-1)	195°F - 200°F (Bend test)	Cherry / Pecan Delicate smoke, foil wrap with brown sugar
Whole Spatchcock Chicken	275°F - 300°F	1.5 - 2 Hours	165°F Breast / 175°F Thigh	Apple / Pecan Higher heat crisps skin, avoids rubbery bite
Whole Thanksgiving Turkey	275°F (135°C)	30 - 35 mins per lb	165°F Breast / 175°F Thigh	Maple / Apple Herb butter under skin, rest 30 mins tented
Beef Tri-Tip (Reverse Sear)	225°F -> 500°F	1.5 - 2 hrs to 130°F	135°F (Medium-Rare)	Oak / Hickory Smoke to 130°F, sear on screaming hot cast iron
Atlantic Salmon Fillet	180°F - 200°F	1.5 - 2 Hours	145°F (Flaky white curd)	Alder / Apple Dry brine brown sugar/salt 4 hrs to form pellicle
Smoked Pork Belly Burnt Ends	250°F (121°C)	4.5 - 5.5 Hours	205°F (Tender cubes)	Hickory / Cherry Smoke cubes 3 hrs, braise in butter/honey/bbq
Prime Beef Ribs (Dino Ribs)	250°F (121°C)	8 - 10 Hours	205°F (Probe tender)	Post Oak Salt & 16-mesh black pepper Dalmatian rub only

PITMASTER PHYSICS: DEFEATING THE STALL & THE RESTING PROTOCOL

The Science of 'The Stall' (150°F - 170°F):

Internal temperature plateau caused by evaporative cooling. Moisture seeps to surface and evaporates, stalling temp for 2 to 6 hours. Do NOT raise smoker temp in panic.

The Texas Crutch (Peach Butcher Paper vs. Foil):

Wrap brisket or pork butt once bark is set (165°F). Pink butcher paper breathes, preserving crisp crunchy bark while trapping heat. Heavy aluminum foil accelerates cook but softens bark.

The Probe Tender Test (Not Just Temperature):

Internal temp is a guide; feel is absolute truth. An instant-read probe thermometer should slide into the thickest part of the flat with zero resistance, like warm butter.

The Faux Cambro Cooler Rest (Mandatory):

Wrap cooked meat in butcher paper, wrap in two old clean bath towels, and rest inside an empty insulated camping cooler for 2 to 4 hours. Juices redistribute and gelatin fully tenderizes.