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• Interview Smokehouse Bar-B-Que Restaurant with Mr. Darioush Ghasemi

Mr. Darioush Ghasemi is the owner of the Smokehouse Barbecue Restaurant, which opened its doors in 1986 and since then is considered one of the great places to have barbecue.

Q. Why do you think Kansas City is a center of barbecue cooking?

There is a saying that you don't leave KC before you have had barbecue. Of course, there are other kinds of food, such as Mexican or Chinese, but Barbecue is something special. Two times in a year there are great contests, where around 5000 individual people and more come together, cook and eat barbecue.

Q. Is barbecue the main regional food in Kansas City? Are there other foods?

Well, just as, lets say Boston is famous for sea food or the south for fried stuff, Kansas City is the center of barbecue.

Q. What do you think is typically American food? What is so American about American food?

That depends on where you are. Maybe in Boston, they would call seafood American food, but here, for instance, barbecue is American food. In New York again they never would say that barbecue is typical American food alone, there it might be bagels and others. At the coast they have got a lot of fish, but here we just have cattle. And many people from the south came here. So when you come to Kansas City and think about regional food, you think about barbecue.

Q. How do you typically eat Barbecue? What are the side dishes? When do you eat it? We had sandwiches, for example. Is that typical for barbecue?

Well sandwiches are pretty easy to eat. You pick it up and you don't mess with the sauce. That is probably why people eat sandwiches a lot. But when it comes to real barbecue, the only real thing is pork, especially ribs. Of course, that takes some preparation, it is messy to eat, the sauce might drip from your fingers, there are the bones, but that still is the best way to eat and taste barbecue. Most of the time you have baked beans, coleslaw and

French Fries that go with it. I would say that baked beans belong to a real good barbecue and of course coleslaw...

Q. You seem to be very fond of barbecue...

That's right, I like to look at cooking as an art, and it is an art to prepare a really good barbecue, and you must love what you are doing. If everybody is happy and it feels like "Hmm" then you really feel good. And if my customers find that it is good, I enjoy it a lot. You have to see that cooking barbecue is pretty tricky; you have that firewood for heat, hickory wood instead of coal, gas, or electricity. That is what grows here, and that is what makes the region important for barbecue, you need hickory wood for a good barbecue, and the experience to take care for the fire. To regulate the heat we use water, which is dripping down on the fire. If it is too hot we might take out the meat too early and it is not done, or it is getting burned. If you take out the meat 20 min early it is not done as well, if you take it out 20 min late, it gets burned.

Q. What kind of food is typically American?

Like I have said, wherever you are, there the people would tell you this is typically American food. Here it is Barbecue, because of the cattle; at the ocean they have shrimps, lobsters, etc.

Q. American food is considered by many Europeans as unhealthy. Have you ever experienced such prejudices?

I think American food is healthy. You have a lot of choice, a wide variety...

There are all these German places, Mexican or Asian restaurants. You have the choice. Of course there is fast food, but people who drive or work can go there, pick it up and eat. But you also have other choices...

Q. But don't you think that German food, for instance, is adapted to the American taste, isn't it?

Exactly! Of course Asian food, or Mexican food, or even German food is adapted to the American taste. Obviously you cannot have the original, you going to have it the way people like it, and here people have another taste than people in Mexico or in Germany. In Germany it is the same way. And even persons are different.

Q. You are right. Why do you think America has these kinds of clichés?

Because, there are things like Mc Donald's. People are busy and so they need something to eat fast. And the children are growing up with Mc Donald's; you are not only going to eat there, but also the children get toys there. And that is taking place already for a long time. That's probably why America is considered this way.

Q. Might that be right for American children as well?

Oh yes, they pick it up right early. My daughter sees it on TV, advertising, etc. So they don't want to go somewhere else, just to Mc Donald's or Wendy's, they get a toy there. And when they get older, they are used to go there, especially when they are busy. Life in Germany is probably much more relaxed.

Q. Not any more, I (Matthias) have eaten fast food a lot, e. g. frozen pizza, and others, people tend to cook more and more at the weekends. However, in Germany there is another cliché as well, which we would like to discuss. Germans tend to think that people here are "bigger," because of the food.

That's the way Americans think about Germans as well, but you all are not! It is just not the truth, just what we think. So it is working with clichés.

After the interview we were shown everything, starting by the oven, the fire and the wood, and Mr. Ghasemi again described to us what was important about making a good barbecue. All in all it was a great experience and it tasted wonderfully.