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SANTA MARIA STYLE BARBECUE STILL SIZZLES AFTER 150 YEARS

Renowned Regional Cuisine Thrives in The Central Coast Wine Country

Complimentary New Brochure Reveals Origins, Ingredients and Purveyors of Santa Maria BBQ

SANTA MARIA, CA—In an age of fickle tastes and culinary fads, Santa Maria Style Barbecue continues to bring more than 150 years of tradition to the table, its popularity growing as more and more visitors embrace what *Sunset* magazine once called “the best barbecue in the world.”

Indeed, Santa Maria Style Barbecue—originating from the picturesque Santa Maria Valley in coastal Santa Barbara County—endures as one of California’s truest regional cuisines, boasting a locally discovered cut of beef cooked over indigenous red oak and served with native pinto beans.

The ingredients, methods and history of Santa Maria Style Barbecue are now detailed a complimentary new brochure offered by the Santa Maria Valley Visitor & Convention Bureau. Copies can be obtained by calling the bureau at (800) 331-3779 or downloaded at www.santamaria.com/visit/section_visitor/barbecue.htm.

“More and more visitors are discovering the unique flavors of Santa Maria Style Barbecue,” said Gina Keough, manager of the Santa Maria Valley Visitor & Convention Bureau. “The new brochure is designed as a convenient primer—it details the origins of Santa Maria Style Barbecue, where to enjoy it today and how to do it yourself.”

Keough said that the growth of the Santa Maria Valley wine country, which featured in the hit movie “Sideways,” has fueled interest and appreciation for Santa Maria Style Barbecue. “Wine tourists are also ‘foodies.’ They are interested in the dining experience, and they seek local flavor both in their wines and in their food.”

Through celebrated local restaurants such as the Far Western Tavern, Jocko’s, Shaw’s Steak House and The Hitching Post, the legacy of Santa Maria Style Barbecue is advanced by a multitude of expert grillers whose masterpieces are offered daily.

The roots of Santa Maria Style Barbecue date back to the “rancho era” of the mid-1800s, when massive ranches occupied the hills of the Santa Maria Valley on California’s Central Coast. Local ranchers regularly fed their crowds of ranch hands by barbecuing meat over earthen pits filled with oak wood coals. According to one source, “The Santa Maria Barbecue grew out of this tradition and achieved its ‘style’ when local residents began to string cuts of beef on skewers or rods and cook the meat over the hot coals of a red oak fire.”

The signature cuts for Santa Maria Style Barbecue are top block sirloin and the triangular-shaped bottom sirloin known as “tri tip,” a cut that originated in the Santa Maria Valley. The meat is rolled in a mixture of salt, pepper and garlic salt just prior to cooking. The red oak—a species of oak native to the region—contributes to a hearty, smoky flavor. Once the meat is trimmed and sliced, the only condiment needed is fresh salsa. The traditional menu also includes French bread dipped in sweet melted butter, tossed green salad and slow-cooked pinto beans, a small pink bean that is grown exclusively in the Santa Maria Valley.

“The fundamentals of Santa Maria Style Barbecue are timeless, but there are also a multitude of local variations that keep it fresh, exciting and contemporary,” said Susan Righetti, whose family has owned the Far Western Tavern since 1958. “Once visitors get a taste of it, they keep coming back for more.”

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