

The Bare Bones of BBQ: 4 BBQ Experts Reveal Their Secrets for Using Pink Butcher Paper



A Peak Inside The Pink Butcher Paper Craze

If you like barbecue – and let's be honest, who doesn't? – then you're probably already familiar with pink butcher paper (sometimes called peach paper.)

It's become a trademark symbol of the true BBQ aficionado's favorite culinary masterpieces as created by both professional and backyard pit masters across the country.

So, what exactly is pink butcher paper? Why has it become so incredibly popular in the world of barbecue? And is it something you should be interested in trying?

We're going to cover the answers to those questions and more as we get down and dirty with four BBQ experts who use and recommend pink butcher paper for cooking and presenting authentic barbecue that's guaranteed to please any crowd.

What is pink butcher paper?

Essentially, pink butcher paper is a proprietary blend of kraft pulp, engineered for resistance to heat and moisture, and is FDA-approved for direct food contact.

This exclusive combination of pulp and natural additives provides the paper with much greater liquid holdout. The process does not include coatings like you'll find on wax paper or freezer paper. It's the manufacturing process of the paper itself that allows it stand up to the heat of a smoker and remain strong even when wet.

Also, certified pink butcher paper is FDA-approved for use with food. Not all papers are, including kraft paper and other possible substitutes, so the safest option for backyard and professional use is FDA-approved butcher paper.

When it comes to aesthetics, the pink/peach color is not representative of any distinctive flavor additives (such as peach essence, which some rumored is included to help flavor the meat). Instead, it's simply the color of the finished paper as it comes out of the exclusive manufacturing process.

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Why pink butcher paper?

Why is pink butcher paper so popular for BBQ?

The explosion in popularity of pink butcher paper among barbecue pros and fans in recent years is undeniable.

Perhaps the most well-known origin of the pink butcher paper frenzy comes from award-winning chef, Aaron Franklin. Franklin's own Austin, Texas restaurant, [Franklin Barbecue](#), is nearly as famous for its five-hour wait times as for the indescribable quality of its meat. This, combined with some smart and interesting video marketing, has led to Aaron Franklin becoming one of the most well-known faces and stories in barbecue today. And what does a leader in the barbecue industry use for the best results? Pink butcher paper, of course.

Why should you care?

While you could be discovering other exciting culinary topics like cuts of beef, styles of smoker, and the newest and fanciest temperature gadgets, is pink butcher paper really that important to the barbecue world? The answer: yes!

In fact, pink butcher paper directly contributes to the flavor, moistness, and texture of your finished product. On top of that, it can help guarantee a perfectly finished bark surrounding tender, flavorful beef. And finally, it can do all of this without adding to the cleanup, cost, or complexity of your BBQ project.

Ready to learn more? Just take it from these four BBQ experts who explain everything you need to know about pink butcher paper's role in perfect barbecue.

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Self-proclaimed “Hardcore Carnivore”, Jess Pyles

[Jess Pyles](#) doesn't just enjoy a good burger. She's a full-out “hardcore carnivore” who's made spreading the word about great barbecue and other meat-eating past times her life's work.

She's the organizer of the popular [Carnivore's Ball](#) – a high-end annual culinary event celebrating all things meat – as well as a cook, writer, TV personality, and internationally respected authority on Texas and competition-style barbecue.

We asked Jess some questions about the popular BBQ trend of using pink butcher paper and here's what she had to say:

How did you first hear about using pink butcher paper in barbecue and when did you see people start using it routinely?

I actually saw it being used before I heard anything about it. This was probably as much as five or six years ago when I noticed some pit masters were using it as a wrap for larger cuts like brisket. At the time, it was just a preference of some pit masters while others still used foil or chose not to wrap at all. Then, maybe about three years ago, I started seeing pink butcher paper becoming far more commonplace as a tray liner or wrap for presentation purposes, right along with seeing it explode in popularity among pit masters.

How do you see the use of pink butcher paper growing in the BBQ industry?

It's funny, actually, because the growth is two-fold: you see professionals in restaurants turning to it more and more over the last few years, both for cooking and presentation purposes. And, since they see it at their favorite restaurants, the backyard pit masters are starting to pick up on using it too, to great effect.

How do you use pink butcher paper at the Carnivore's Ball?

While the Carnivore's Ball is a high-end dining experience, we still wanted to maintain a rustic, authentic, Texas barbecue feel to it. Since pink butcher paper is now iconic of Texas BBQ, even though tin trays lined with it wouldn't work for this kind of event, we wanted the paper to still be highly visible. So, we had our menus custom printed on sheets of pink butcher paper and they came out really well.

Why do you prefer using pink butcher paper over other options?

I think pink butcher paper beats foil hands down for cooking because it's porous, which allows the meat to breathe. Before it became popular, foil was the standby. But anyone who has tried both can't help but tell the difference. It's really practical too because a lot of people underestimate the engineering that goes into it. It has excellent wet strength, which is vital to avoid messy slip-ups when cooking, resting, and cutting meat. And it accomplishes this without any sort of plastic coating or anything else that could affect the flavor of what you're cooking. I can't imagine a better alternative.



A culinary veteran from the San Francisco Bay area, Chef Rob Larman



Rob Larman has already had a distinguished career in the kitchens of some of the most respected restaurants in the San Francisco area over the last 25 years, but he's not slowing down. Today, he owns and operates his own restaurant and mobile catering establishment, called [Cochon Volant BBQ](#) (or Flying Pig Barbecue.)

This casual eatery serves up authentic American barbecue "texas-style", which, according to Larman, includes fantastic food served up on pink butcher paper-lined trays.

We asked Chef Rob about how he uses pink butcher paper and how he sees its impact on the industry. Here's what he had to say:

How did you first hear about using pink butcher paper for BBQ and when did you start using it?

I was visiting Austin, Texas a few years back, and no one in my line of work visits Austin without dropping in to Franklin Barbecue. I'd already been doing the mobile BBQ catering back in California, but I was thinking about opening a permanent restaurant at that time. I saw that Aaron Franklin was using pink butcher paper, and it intrigued me. I ordered up a small supply on Amazon and tested it. I loved the result. I also liked the idea of using it as an underlie for my trays, especially since it's become so closely connected to Texas BBQ.

How do you see the use of pink butcher paper growing in the industry?

Obviously, it's exploding down in Texas and other places around the country, but here in California I honestly don't see many people using it. That's another reason I really like it right now, because it gives Cochon Volant BBQ a visual aesthetic that others in the area aren't copying. It's unique and practical.

How do you use pink butcher paper in your restaurant and catering?

We mostly use it in the restaurant where we wrap some of the meat near the end of cooking, and we wrap all of it for storage in the holding cabinet so it doesn't dry out or make a mess. We also use it on every tray we serve, usually with the food planted right on the paper, so it makes for really quick and simple clean up.

Why do you prefer using pink butcher paper over other available options?

The big problem with foil is that it doesn't breathe. But it also leaves a flavor on the meat. Not everyone detects that, especially if they've always had barbecue that's been wrapped in foil. But it's definitely noticeable once you try it in paper. I find that pink butcher paper is both functional and aesthetically pleasing.

A traditional BBQ chef in the middle of BBQ Heaven (Austin, TX), Evan LeRoy

Evan LeRoy is practicing the fine art of authentic Texas barbecue right in the heart of Texas BBQ country: Austin. His restaurant, [Freedmen's](#) Craft Cocktails and Fine Foods, is well known for its generous portions of brisket, ribs, or pulled pork, smoked to perfection and accompanied by horseradish potato salad and homemade pickles.

Perhaps equally well known is their famous Whiskey Wall, a head-spinning selection of whiskeys for every taste and budget. Of course, the rest of the bar is fully stocked as well.

We asked Evan LeRoy for the Austin point-of-view regarding pink butcher paper, and here's what he told us:

How did you first hear about using pink butcher paper for BBQ, and when did you start using it?

I saw butcher paper being used to wrap meat in the smoker and while resting way back when I worked at Hill Country BBQ in New York. The owner there had visited Kreuz Market, one of the oldest Texas barbecue joints around, and saw them using it there. Mostly it was white butcher paper being used, which is essentially the same. But these days, BBQ has exploded across the country like never before, and pink butcher paper happened to be en vogue at the time when that happened, so it's become so closely related to authentic Texas barbecue that if you're not using pink butcher paper, people might question your legitimacy.

How do you use pink butcher paper at your restaurant?

We cut our paper into individual sheets to fit our two tray sizes: 8.5x11" for our standard ¼ tray, and half that size for our smaller 1/8 tray, used for sandwiches. We also use pink butcher paper extensively for wrapping and holding meat because it breathes but retains some moisture, so it does a great job keeping cut pieces from oxidizing too fast. We use it a little bit right in the smoker too.

Why do you prefer pink butcher paper over other alternatives?

Really, Texas barbecue just doesn't look right served on anything else. I mean, I can't see it on a fine piece of china, or even a paper plate. Even white butcher paper doesn't quite cut it at this point. To truly get the classic look that every BBQ fan is expecting and hoping for when they come to a smokehouse, you need to serve the food right on pink butcher paper on a tray or in a basket. Nothing else seems right.



Bringing Texas BBQ to the Pacific Northwest, Jeff Knoch

Jeff Knoch has brought the style and authentic flavor of Texas barbecue to the great Northwest through his restaurant, [Jeff's Texas Style BBQ](#), which officially opened for business on January 2, 2016.

It has obviously filled a latent desire for carnivores in the Marysville, Washington area, because Jeff has sold out of food regularly since opening his doors.



Jeff's been using pink butcher paper from the start at his restaurant, and we wanted to get the perspective of a new entry into the field (although Jeff himself is no newbie) to see if this trend has legs. Here's what Jeff had to say:

How did you hear about pink butcher paper for BBQ?

I heard about it through Aaron Franklin at Franklin BBQ in Austin about four years ago. Up until then, I'd been using foil but the paper seemed like a good thing to try because it allows some – but not all – of the moisture to escape. That way, it doesn't braise the meat. It also doesn't create additional bark, and instead it slows bark formation down so it's easier to get that perfect bark, which is vital to great Texas style BBQ.

How do you see the use of pink butcher paper growing in the industry? Does this trend have staying power?

I see it continuing to grow because it's not just some fad gadget or experimental technique. As people try it, they find the premise is sound. It does exactly what we want it to do as pit masters. It's already become the standard for many restaurants and it's going to become even more popular with backyard chefs too.

How do you use pink butcher paper at your restaurant?

We use it in three main ways: when the meat gets to the color and consistency I want, I wrap it up and put it back in the smoker to finish, then I'll loosely unwrap it and let it cool to about 150 degrees internal temperature. Then, I'll rewrap it and put it in our Winston CVAP which matches the meat's humidity level so it doesn't dry out at all while it waits. We also use pink butcher paper as tray liners and to line every sheet pan. And finally, our "doggie bags" and to-go orders are wrapped in butcher paper then put in a plastic bag for easy transport.

Why do you prefer pink butcher paper over other alternatives?

For one thing, it works. It doesn't affect flavor like foil can, and it's got the wet strength we need without any sort of wax or plastic coating that could come off on the food. But, there's also a visual appeal. Texas BBQ is a hot style right now, and pink butcher paper is just part of the expected look when people come to a Texas style BBQ restaurant. Bucking that look could make barbecue fans think you don't know what you're doing. I think most pit masters would agree, pink butcher paper makes for a more consistent quality product, and it just looks right.



The experts have spoken.

So what can we conclude?

Based on our conversations with these BBQ experts from across the country, from many different backgrounds and current positions, we can definitely conclude some points about pink butcher paper:

- It has the functional chops to help pit masters make great food.
- It has the look and feel BBQ enthusiasts expect from an authentic Texas style BBQ.
- It's an inexpensive, multi-purpose tool with several applications in the restaurant and backyard pits all across the nation.

So, perhaps the most important question to ask at this point is: *How do you get your pink butcher paper and start cooking like the pros?*

We welcome you to [contact us](#) to learn more about pink butcher paper for your next BBQ endeavor, or to [place an order](#) today.

