

BARBECUE

HALL OF FAME



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American Royal Names 2024 Barbecue Hall of Fame® Inductees

Barbecue industry leaders honored for their skill, success and achievements

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (May 22, 2024) — The American Royal [Barbecue Hall of Fame®](#) is pleased to announce the inductees into its 2024 Hall of Fame class. The Hall of Fame, barbecue's top honor, aims to recognize, document and preserve barbecue heritage, and it will be welcoming four inductees and three legacy inductees this year.

Danielle Bennett, Auburndale, Florida; Rick Browne, Portland, Oregon; Steve Grady, Dudley, North Carolina; and Ed Maurin, Kansas City, Missouri, are this year's Hall of Fame Inductees in recognition of their significant contributions to the barbecue community. Matt Garner, Houston, Texas; Bob Gibson, Decatur, Alabama; and Jose "Joe" Romero, Los Angeles, California have been selected as legacy members.

The 2024 inductees' barbecue history and achievements are remarkable. Learn more about each of them:

- **Danielle Bennett**, known as "Diva Q," is a certified barbecue and grilling expert, chef, pitmaster, celebrated TV host, and best-selling author. She has secured over 400 barbecue awards, including multiple world championships, and has taught over 20,000 students about barbecue and grilling techniques. Bennett is also a motivational speaker, passionate about inspiring others to overcome adversity.
- **Rick Browne** is a renowned barbecue pitmaster, chef, journalist, photojournalist, author and TV cooking show host who has traveled the world on assignment for consumer, travel, news and airline magazines. Browne created *Barbecue America Magazine*, the popular *Barbecue America* TV series and Outdoor Channel's *Ready, Aim...Grill*. He was recently named as the U.S. correspondent for the German grilling and barbecue magazine, FIRE&FOOD. The Kansas City Barbecue Society has also awarded Browne with an honorary Ph.B., doctor of barbecue philosophy.
- **Steve Grady** founded one of North Carolina's most respected barbecue restaurants, Grady's Barbecue. The restaurant, known for its Eastern style, is listed on The North Carolina Barbecue Society Historic Barbecue Trail and has been featured in numerous national media outlets, books and blogs. Steve and his wife, Geral, have been honored with the first NC Barbecue Revival Lifetime Achievement Award, and were recently inducted in the North Carolina BBQ Hall of Fame.
- **Ed Maurin**, or "Fast Eddy," built his career around the development of pellet cooking tools. In 1997, Fast Eddy's BBQ was established and built pellet fired smoker ovens for commercial and

residential use. The smokers were later known worldwide as Fast Eddy by Cookshack smokers. Later in his career, Maurin designed the first commercially listed pellet fired pizza oven and opened a pizza restaurant in Kansas City, 451 Pizza.

The 2024 legacy inductees are being honored for the impact they made on barbecue during their lives. Learn more about each of them:

- **Matt Garner** opened Matt Garner’s Bar-B-Q in 1920. In its day, the drive-in combined Creole flavor influences from Garner’s upbringing in Louisiana and techniques of the southern U.S., brought to Houston by freed slaves. Garner is credited with creating this combination that became known as East Texas-style barbecue, a Houston staple.
- **Bob Gibson** is credited with helping craft the strong barbecue landscape in Alabama, and the creation of his own pit barbecue technique. Gibson also developed Alabama White Sauce, which is on restaurant menus and store shelves all over the world. His restaurant, Big Bob Gibson Bar-B-Q, is in the Alabama BBQ Hall of Fame, and his barbecue team received 18 world championships in various meat categories.
- **Jose “Joe” Romero’s** barbecue talent began by cooking for family and small social gatherings in the 1880s, which led to multiple catering requests throughout Southern California. His so-called “Spanish barbecues” became huge in the region, and the largest, held in San Francisco, fed 38,000 people with 20,000 pounds of meat. His success led to Romero being locally known as “The Barbecue King,” and his legacy lives on through his son, Frank.

“Being inducted in the Barbecue Hall of Fame is a prestigious honor for these individuals,” said Jackie McClaskey, president and CEO of the American Royal Association. “For many, barbecue is a sport. These pitmasters, restaurant owners and barbecue enthusiasts are talented, creative individuals with a distinct passion for their ‘sport’ and have dedicated their careers, or their lives, to service in the barbecue industry. At the American Royal, we are thrilled to welcome this group of barbecue legends into the Hall of Fame alongside many distinguished peers.”

The 2024 inductees will be recognized during the 44th American Royal World Series of Barbecue®, planned for October 30-November 3, in Kansas City, Kansas. For more information about the American Royal Barbecue Hall of Fame, visit barbecuehalloffame.com.

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About the American Royal Association

A Kansas City tradition since 1899, the American Royal is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization whose mission is to be the nation’s leader for food and agriculture education, events and engagement. The American Royal provides opportunities for youth and adults from around the world to engage in high-quality events and experiences, including nationally competitive livestock shows, the world’s largest barbecue competition, regional and national equine shows, youth and professional rodeos, and elementary and secondary education outreach. Support from partners, members, and volunteers help

the American Royal achieve its vision of a world where food and agriculture are celebrated, and all generations are committed to its future.

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