

MATT GARNER



2024 HALL OF FAME LEGACY INDUCTEE

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Charles Matthew “Matt” Garner was born in Opelousas, Louisiana sometime between 1870 and 1880. He moved to Houston with his wife Helen around 1920 and opened Matt Garner’s Bar-B-Q Drive-In in the Freedmen’s Town neighborhood east of downtown that was the center of African-American life in the early 1900s.

Combining the Creole influences of his upbringing with the barbecue techniques of the southern U.S. brought to Houston by freed slaves, Garner is considered the father of the East Texas-style of barbecue for which Houston is known. If you read old interviews with pitmasters who established Houston’s contemporary barbecue scene – Harry Green, Joe Burney, John Davis, Oscar Lott – they inevitably mentioned the influence of Matt Garner.

Garner is credited with bringing the design of rectangular brick barbecue pits to Houston, along with the recipe for the all-beef “Beaumont-style” beef links that are still served in some barbecue restaurants in Houston and Beaumont. Garner became known as the “Barbecue baron” of Houston and after his death in 1945, his wife Helen, daughter Beulah and son-in-law Leroy continued the traditions of Matt Garner’s BBQ well into the 1980s.