

STEVE GRADY



2024 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

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In 1986, after GERAL Grady returned from rehab only to find she no longer had a job due to an injury, her husband Steve, who worked at a lumber yard, decided to take action. Determined to create a livelihood for them both, Steve bought a family member's interest in a small barbecue operation. With access to wood from his former employer, Steve committed to cooking barbecue the old-fashioned way, over open pits. Steve managed the pits and the delivery truck, while GERAL ran the kitchen. Grady's Barbecue opened its doors for business on July 4, 1986, and has since become one of North Carolina's most respected barbecue restaurants.

From the start, the Gradys' approach to barbecue has been rooted in tradition. Steve's skills were formed in his youth, learning to cook whole hogs from his father and grandfather. By the time he was "big enough to walk," he was helping his grandfather, the neighborhood pitmaster, cook pigs in barbecue pits dug directly into the ground for fall and winter celebrations. Mrs. Grady, meanwhile, learned her culinary skills from her mother, grandmother, and mother-in-law, bringing a rich legacy of family recipes to the restaurant.

Grady's BBQ stands out not only for its exceptional food but also as one of the few barbecue restaurants in North Carolina owned and operated by a Black couple. Listed on The North Carolina Barbecue Society (NCBS) Historic Barbecue Trail, Grady's has earned high praise from Jim Early, president of the Society, who states, "This 'cue is so good you don't want to swallow it. It is one of the best eastern-style 'cues one will ever taste – pure 'cue heaven on earth."

Known for its Eastern-style, whole hog barbecue that is moist, rich, smoky, flecked with outside brown and bits of skin, and hand-chopped to perfection, Grady's BBQ has been featured in numerous national outlets, including GQ Magazine, USA TODAY, Our State Magazine, TIME, The Washington Post, National Geographic, Southern Living, and Garden & Gun Magazine. The restaurant has also been highlighted in numerous books and blogs written by barbecue enthusiasts.

Steve and GERAL Grady were honored with the first NC Barbecue Revival Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016, presented by Rien Fertel, recognizing their enduring contribution to the tradition of North Carolina barbecue. In 2024 the pair were inducted into the North Carolina BBQ Hall of Fame!

At 89 years old, Steve Grady continues to represent the essence of Eastern North Carolina BBQ. Grady's BBQ remains a testament to the enduring legacy of traditional barbecue methods and the dedication of a couple who turned their passion into a beloved institution. Their restaurant not only serves as a place to enjoy great food but also as a gathering spot where memories are made, and stories are shared.