

DAVID KLOSE



2025 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

DAVID KLOSE

David Klose from Houston, Texas has been called everything from the “Paul Bunion of BBQ” to “The King of Que”.

For over 4 decades David Klose has been dedicated to teaching others how BBQ can change their lives. These days most people know of David as just a BBQ Pit manufacturer and while his company did just celebrate 40 years in business, David has always cared more about people than products, making sure every product fits the need.

Over the past 40 years David has won many awards including World Barbecue Grand Champion in 2000. He was named Mr. Barbecue and chosen as the International Ambassador of Barbecue representing “The World BBQ Organization”. He has traveled extensively to represent BBQ in Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Germany, Ireland and even Budapest Hungary.

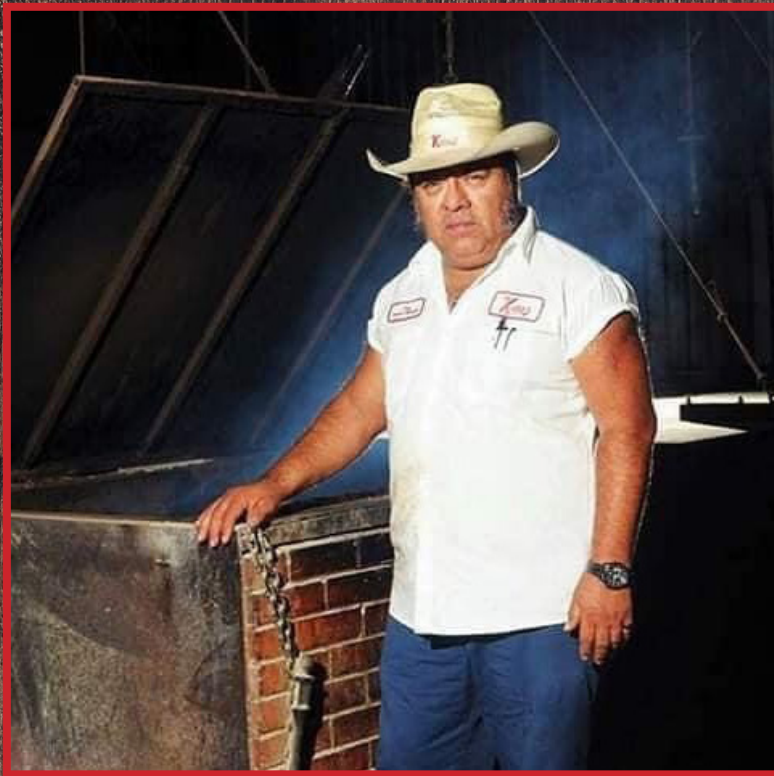
He has been featured on TV Shows including, A Cooks Tour with Anthony Bourdain, Man, Fire, Food Starring Roger Mooking, and Destination America’s EPIC plus many more.

While David has sponsored many new cooks and teams just starting out he also sponsors events like pig racing at the Rodeo and local high school FFA events. As part of the Texas BBQ Army he spent days cooking for hundreds of families displaced by Hurricane Harvey.

David has been honored by Texas Air National Guard for supporting Military families by providing BBQ meals to those being deployed. While the days of Television and competitions may be behind him, at 73 years old David still spends hours a day, every day, on the phone coaching people on flavor profiles, fire management, how to get into competitions, catering, or even tips to start a brick and mortar location.

His amazing showmanship, years of experience, and his love for people have made him a great entertainer and storyteller. David’s life is dedicated to teaching others how to have fun and BBQ Better.

ROY PEREZ



2025 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

ROY PEREZ

Roy Perez has lived in Lockhart, Texas his entire life. When he graduated high school, he worked as a carpenter for four years until the housing market crashed. With bills to pay, he walked into Kreuz Market on March 25, 1987, hoping they would hire him for anything. Rick Schmidt, the owner, hired him on the spot as a sausage cook. Over the years, he learned all the aspects of a traditional Texas barbecue business, from customer service to the subtleties of slicing to cooking for hundreds of people.

When the former pitmaster left, Rick must have seen something in his abilities and brought him along as the next pitmaster. Under Rick Schmidt's great mentorship, he learned how to cook many different meats, each of them requiring its own special method, all of them requiring the right rhythm and timing. There was a lot more to it than throwing meat on a hot fire and coming back a few hours later to a perfectly finished product.

Everyone who knows him knows he loves Elvis Presley. Elvis Presley's philosophy of life was a guide to his own: no matter how humble your beginnings, work hard at what you love and you can't help but succeed. For Perez, what started as a simple job became a business he would do for free if he could. It was never just about selling barbecue. It has always been about making customers feel at home, about upholding tradition, and about never taking your fans for granted. In his 37 years at Kreuz, he hopes he has achieved this, and under the leadership of Rick's son, Keith, he hopes to continue the legacy.

DONNY TEEL



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DONNY TEEL

Donny Teel is a recognized legend in the competitive barbecue world with over 25 years of experience, consistently ranking among the top competitors in the industry. As the leader of The Boys from Tornado Alley, Donny and his team have won multiple Grand Championships at some of the most prestigious barbecue competitions, including the Jack Daniel's World Championship and the American Royal Grand Championship. With over 50 Grand Championships and several Reserve Grand Championships to his name, Donny's legacy as a top-tier pitmaster is well-established. Notably, he also achieved one of the highest scores ever given at a KCBS event, with a near-perfect score of 717.14 out of 720.

Outside of the competition circuit, Donny owns and operates Buffalo's Barbecue in Sperry, Oklahoma, where his pitmaster skills continue to serve the local community. His barbecue stand has become a local favorite, known for consistently selling out each day, and regularly ranks among the top BBQ spots in Oklahoma.

Donny's commitment to the barbecue community goes beyond his own success. He has been an invaluable mentor, always willing to share his knowledge with new cooks and competitors. Additionally, he has served on the board of directors for both KCBS and the Oklahoma BBQ Association, contributing his time and expertise to help shape the future of the BBQ world. Donny's generosity also extends to his local community, where he frequently donates BBQ for school benefit dinners, fundraisers, and various events. His passion, success, and dedication to both BBQ and his community make him a respected figure in the barbecue world.

HELEN TURNER



2025 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

HELEN TURNER

Helen Turner is an influential pitmaster and the proud owner of Helen's Bar-B-Q in Brownsville, Tennessee, a beloved establishment known for its outstanding barbecue. In 1996, she took the reins of the restaurant from the previous owner, marking the beginning of her career as a pitmaster. Helen's commitment to tradition is evident in her approach to cooking — using all wood and simple cinder block pits to prepare some of the best pork shoulders in the country. Her work has earned her a well-deserved spot on numerous top barbecue lists, including rankings by Southern Living and Thrillist.

Helen's skills and dedication to the craft were recognized in 2012 when she was honored with the Southern Foodways Alliance Ruth Fertel Keeper of the Flame Award. This prestigious award celebrated her significant contributions to Southern food culture, particularly in the male-dominated world of barbecue. As one of the few female pitmasters in the industry, Helen has proven that women can master the art of barbecue just as effectively as any man, breaking barriers and inspiring future generations of women in the field.

Not only is Helen known for her incredible barbecue, but she has also earned a reputation as a community leader. While Helen retired and closed the restaurant in December 2024, for 28 years, Helen's Bar-B-Q was a cornerstone of Brownsville, TN, where it served as a gathering place for locals and visitors alike. Her unwavering commitment to the craft and her dedication to her community have made Helen Turner a respected and beloved figure in the world of barbecue.

ERNEST ALEXANDER



2025 HALL OF FAME LEGACY INDUCTEE

ERNEST “ALECK” ALEXANDER

Ernest “Aleck” Alexander was a beloved Atlanta pitmaster and cultural icon whose restaurant, Aleck’s Barbecue Heaven, operated for nearly half a century and stood as both a culinary landmark and a quiet cornerstone of the civil rights era.

Opening in 1942, Aleck hand-built his original barbecue pit from cobblestones reclaimed from the street outside—Hunter Street, later renamed Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. A master brickmason and businessman, he expanded to six barbecue joints across Atlanta, designing and constructing each pit himself. Aleck’s flagship location was famously frequented by his friend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who often stopped by for ribs before major speeches—despite Coretta Scott King’s wishes for a stricter diet. After King’s assassination, Aleck honored his friend with a portrait and a special booth reserved by invitation only.

Even after a stroke in 1979, Aleck continued working at the restaurant until his passing in 1986. Today, his daughter Pamela Alexander preserves his legacy through Aleck’s “Comeback” sauce and storytelling. Celebrated by The New York Times, The Washington Post, and featured in the Atlanta History Center’s “Barbecue Nation” exhibit, Aleck’s influence endures as a symbol of culinary craftsmanship, Black entrepreneurship, and cultural history in the American South.

WALTER JETTON



2025 HALL OF FAME LEGACY INDUCTEE

WALTER JETTON

Walter Jetton, known as the “King of Barbecue,” was a legendary Texas pitmaster whose influence helped bring Lone Star-style barbecue to national prominence.

Based in Fort Worth, Jetton ran one of the most prolific catering operations of his time—serving over 1.5 million people annually and cooking everything from brisket to whole steers over open pits. He gained widespread fame as President Lyndon B. Johnson’s personal pitmaster, catering high-profile events at the LBJ Ranch, including the first presidential barbecue in U.S. history in 1963.

Jetton’s distinctive chuckwagon-style presentations, cowboy charm, and rich, smoky flavors captured the imagination of the American public. In 1965, he co-authored Walter Jetton’s LBJ Barbecue Cook Book, preserving his techniques and Texas traditions for future generations. Through his pioneering methods, national media appearances, and dedication to authentic barbecue, Jetton helped shape the identity of Texas barbecue and left an indelible mark on American culinary history.

PAUL SCHATTE



2025 HALL OF FAME LEGACY INDUCTEE

PAUL SCHATTE

Paul Schatte was a rare blend of educator, entrepreneur, and world-class pitmaster whose career profoundly shaped the barbecue community in Oklahoma and beyond. Beginning his professional life as a teacher and later a school superintendent, Paul's passion for barbecue—rooted in his childhood family cookouts in suburban Houston—eventually led him to the competitive BBQ circuit, where he rapidly rose to prominence.

After securing over 50 Grand and Reserve Grand Championships across the U.S. and earning runner-up for KCBS Rookie of the Year in 1991, Paul claimed the prestigious Jack Daniel's World Championship Invitational Barbecue title in 1994. In 1999, he became General Manager of Head Country Food Products in Ponca City, Oklahoma. Under his visionary leadership, the company expanded from a 12-person operation producing 1,100 gallons a day to a global brand employing 30 and producing over 6,000 gallons daily, with Head Country sauces now distributed in more than a dozen countries.

Paul was inducted into the inaugural class of the Oklahoma Barbecue Society Hall of Fame in 2014 and received numerous accolades, including the Oklahoma Governor's Award for Excellence in Exporting and appointment as Honorary Chairman of the Oklahoma Business Advisory Council. Beyond business and competition, Paul has remained a passionate educator—mentoring countless up-and-coming BBQ competitors, producing instructional videos, and generously sharing his expertise and products with the BBQ community.

Rooted in faith, family, and service, Paul also contributed decades of leadership in civic roles, from church and school boards to economic development committees. His motto, "Outdoor cooking is the oldest method known to mankind, but Americans have perfected it!", reflects both his respect for the craft and his commitment to elevating it for future generations.

NATIONAL BARBECUE NEWS



2025 HALL OF FAME IMPACT AWARD WINNER

NATIONAL BARBECUE NEWS

Carlene and Joe Phelps started the National Barbecue News, along with Francis and Donald “Doc” Gillis, in 1990. Until the late 1990s, it was the ONLY source for news about barbecue restaurants, teams, barbecue competitions, and contest locations around the country. Started as primarily news about the Memphis in May circuit, it expanded over the years to include coverage about competitors and events in every sanctioning body, along with all facets of the barbecue world.

In addition to publishing the paper, in 1991, the Phelps and Gillis families co-founded the National Barbecue Association, organizing a yearly conference and trade show which attracted barbecue restaurateurs, competitors, and enthusiasts from around the country. Created to serve the needs of the expansive, diverse, and ever-growing barbecue industry, the organization provided educational sessions, bus tours of area restaurants, and, more importantly, an opportunity for the barbecue world to network and form relationships.

At the time of its founding, various organizations focused on specific segments or regions of the barbecue world, but no single entity existed to unify and strengthen the industry as a whole. Over the years, NBBQA has grown into a dynamic trade association that supports all aspects of the multi-billion-dollar barbecue and grilling industry. It also works to promote public engagement, education, and appreciation for America’s rich barbecue heritage.

Barbecue News continues to be the voice for the NBBQA as the primary source for news about every aspect of the barbecue world. Today, Janet and Kell Phelps are continuing Kell’s parents’ work as they lead both the magazine and the organization into their 35th year.