

HELEN TURNER



2025 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

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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.