

NATIONAL BARBECUE NEWS



2025 HALL OF FAME IMPACT AWARD WINNER

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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.