Ask the average person to tell you a city famous for its barbecue, and you might hear answers like Memphis, St. Louis, Kansas City or Austin. But a true barbecue aficionado knows that sometimes you need to go off the beaten path to find something special. A tradition so authentic that people will travel for miles and miles just to experience it.

That place is Owensboro, Kentucky. And that tradition is barbecued mutton.

**What is Mutton, Anyway?**
Although there is no hard-and-fast definition, mutton is simply the meat from older sheep, aged one to five years. Just as beef is mature veal, so mutton is mature lamb. According to the L.A. Times, “mutton is older, wiser, tastier lamb.” However, many people assume mutton is tougher and gamier than lamb, further reinforcing its bad rap.

**A Little History**
Sheep, which were introduced in North America in the 15th century, were considered one of the most nutritious and environmentally sustainable sources of meat: also producing milk, wool, and manure. Eaten in both cottages and palaces alike, mutton was found abundantly throughout the 18th and 19th century as the centerpiece in traditional meals like Shepherd’s Pie, stews, and other complex dishes. Popularity declined in the 20th century due to changes in farming style and faster lifestyles. After all, mutton demands more aging time, careful handling, and longer cooking times than other meats.

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**Tra. di. tion** *(trea dish’ shen): The handing down orally of stories, beliefs, customs, etc. from generation to generation. A long-established custom or practice that has the effect of an unwritten law.

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**The Owensboro Exception**
The exception to this trend is here in Owensboro, KY, where mutton, specifically barbecued mutton, is king. In fact, there is more barbecued mutton per capita in Owensboro than any other place in the world, earning the title “Barbecue Capital of the World.” So why has mutton continued to grow in popularity here, while declining elsewhere? Many attribute Owensboro’s early Welsh settlers who raised enormous herds of sheep. Agriculture records back up this idea documenting more than 11,000 sheep, compared to 6,570 beef cattle, radically different from today’s records. So naturally, if a barbecue was in order, mutton would be the meat.

**Moonlite Bar-B-Q**
Over the past five decades, Moonlite Bar-B-Q has become a Kentucky legend. According to Southern Living Magazine, we’ve perfected Owensboro’s old-fashioned Kentucky tradition, being one of the few restaurants in the country that serves barbecued mutton. As a fourth generation family-owned restaurant, we rely on a slow-cook method, over our handbuilt hickory burning pit. Each piece of meat must be dipped or basted several times with our vinegar based pit dip. After 12 hours, you get the pot-roast tender, hickory smoked flavor, no need for sauce, barbequed mutton we are famous for.
In February 1963, Catherine and Pappy Bosley bought Moonlite for $50,000—a decision that would forever change the lives of generations to come. Working two jobs to make ends meet, Pappy, age 48, drove a cab for Veterans Cab Company and worked at Fleishman’s Distillery, while his wife Catherine, 42, was a foreman at Glenmore Distillery. When Fleischman’s informed Pappy he was being laid off, they decided to pour everything into their dream. The Bosleys, with their five children, moved in with Catherine’s mother and sold their home, using the $5,000 dollar profit to make the down payment on the Moonlite Restaurant. Apart from faith and hard work, they entered the restaurant business with no experience, and little formal education.

At the time, Moonlite was a 14-year-old barbecue joint with 30 seats including stools at the counter. Today, the restaurant seats 350 guests, serves of ~350,000 meals per year, and requires a staff of more than 120 dedicated members working various facets of the business, from catering to the online shop. Some staff have worked at Moonlite for over 19 years. They are considered not only part of the family, but also the heart of what makes Moonlite great.

Despite this success, the restaurant feels as if nothing has changed in the last 50+ years. You can sense the warm family atmosphere and smell the hickory barbeque pit as soon as you walk through the front doors. Just inside, the walls are lined with memorabilia of famous visitors, awards, and family heirlooms that gives the perception you’re stepping into history. The enormous hand built pit, comparable in size to four mid-size cars stacked together, contains a constant fire burning nothing but hickory wood, which imparts Moonlite’s famous flavor.

In an era of chain restaurants and frozen food, this experience of true hospitality and proudly crafted, award-winning barbeque is what spreads the tradition of Moonlite as a destination eatery across the nation.

There is sound of friendly banter as locals catch up on “what’s happening” while picking up their order at the fast-paced carry-out counter. Most noticeable are the customers, sitting by the fire or inside a wood booth, that drive for hours to enjoy top rated food and hospitality. As a destination restaurant, it’s not uncommon to see people from all over the world, from Russian Goodwill Ambassadors to bus loads from New Zealand. Even former President Bill Clinton has paid a visit.

The famous buffet is the main event and according to Gourmet Magazine, is "spectacular" and "puts Owensboro barbeque in a class by itself." Offering a never ending variety of delicious barbecued mutton, pork, ribs, chicken, ham and beef, numerous vegetables, a fantastic salad bar, and dessert bar of homemade pies, the buffet allows you to try something new or eat extra of your favorites. The buffet is like an extension of Grandma’s family table where at any moment you might hear, “Y’all, there is plenty more.” For those who know exactly what they like, the menu features classic options like the barbecue sandwich served Owensboro style; on a hamburger bun with barbecue sauce, sliced onion and pickles, and accompanied by Pappy’s famous mutton Dip.

Today, third generation Bosleys proudly walk through the doors, benefiting from Pappy and Catherine’s decision in 1963. Moonlite has now grown into something far greater than just a successful restaurant, it’s a Kentucky tradition.
JUST THE FACTS, MA'AM: MOONLITE AT A GLANCE


Location: 2840 W Parrish Ave., Owensboro, Kentucky 42301

Barbecue Capital of the World: There is more barbeque mutton per capita in Owensboro than any other place in the world, earning the title “Barbecue Capital of the World.” Among other things, Owensboro is famous for the International Bar-B-Q Festival, which draws barbecue fans from all over the world. Every May, 20,000 pounds of ewes (female sheep, known as mutton) are cooked over open pits fired by Moonlite.

The Restaurant: When the Bosleys took over ownership, Moonlite was a fourteen year old barbecue joint with 30 seats including stools at the counter. Today, the restaurant seats 350 and serves over ~350,000 meals per year. As a destination experience, customers come from all over the world to enjoy our top rated food, one of a kind buffet and southern hospitality.

What are we famous for?: Barbeque mutton and our unique restaurant buffet.

What is Mutton?: Although there is no legal definition, mutton is simply the meat from older sheep (1 year - 5 years) – just as beef is mature meat, so mutton is mature lamb. At Moonlite, we buy about 2-year-old female ‘ewes’ (sheep) that have just the right maturity to have a rich, meaty taste that’s more satisfying than lamb.

That’s a lot of Mutton: Moonlite is the largest mutton distributors in the country. Serving over 10,000 pounds of mutton a week, the restaurant is responsible for about 10% of the ‘fat ewes’ purchased in the United States.

The Kentucky Tradition: Being a fourth generation family owned restaurant, “Moonlite BBQ has perfected the century-old Kentucky barbecue mutton tradition in Owensboro”, according to Southern Living Magazine.

Our Historic Legacy: Pappy Bosley’s cleaver and butcher knife that he used from 1963 till 2013 are now enshrined in a permanent exhibit at the Southern Food and Beverage Museum in New Orleans. It is conservatively estimated to have butchered almost a ¼ million mutton carcasses, helping to cement a reputation for serving the best barbecued mutton in Kentucky, and indeed the nation.

Barbecue Secrets: As Ken Bosley once said, “there are no secrets, just hard work and patience.” Meats are personally selected for quality, then cooked for around 12 hours inside our custom built, hickory fired pits. This gives them that distinctive hickory flavor Moonlite is famous for.

The Pit: The enormous pit, comparable in size to four mid-size cars stacked together, contains a constant fire, burning 24/7. Over the pit, which an uncle built by hand, there are huge double decker grills, with doors opening from both sides that are four feet wide. The pit is so deep, the pitmaster has to move the meat with pitchforks.

Our Cooking Process: Our famous slow cook method requires our pit cooks dip (baste) each piece several times with our vinegar based pit dip during the process. Only after the meat cooks do we put on Kentucky’s special sauces made from Pappy Bosley’s famous Black Barbecue Sauce Dip recipe. This produces that delicate, delicious taste which has helped make Moonlite the Kentucky Barbeque Tradition.

Moonlite Pitmasters: To become a pitmaster at Moonlite, it takes two years, or about 4,200 hours, of training.

Growing Enterprise: Moonlite has grown into a multifaceted business that includes the restaurant, carry-out, catering, online store & products, and the Wholesale Food Division.

DID YOU KNOW?

- 40 cents was the cost of the first Moonlite mutton sandwich.
- Most places are afraid for their barbeque to be tasted unless it’s swimming in sauce. Moonlite puts the sauce on the table!
- Pappy, who dressed in overalls and chewed a cigar, worked 18 hour days and ran the restaurant every day as if it was going to go out of business.
- The enormous Black Kettle that sits in front of the restaurant signifies the burgoo pots inside the kitchen.
- In 1963, mutton was 11 cents per pound. Pappy thought it would put us out of business when it went up to 17 cents.
- Upon first opening, Catherine would make pies at home to sell & serve at Moonlite.
- Moonlite is the largest distributor of mutton in the country, serving over 10,000 pounds of mutton per week (15,000 pounds of meat).
- Over 350,000 meals are served each year with annual sales estimated at more than $5 million.
- Halloween in 2003, Moonlite sold 19,000 Sandwiches in one day.
- Famous visitors, including former President Bill Clinton, former Vice President Al Gore, former second lady Marilyn Quayle, U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh, Jim Nabors, Bill Monroe, Pam Tillis, William Shatner, Kevin Costner, Reba McIntyre and Emmylou Harris are a few whom we have served.
- The Bosley Family’s first menu is now on permanent display at the Southern Food & Beverage Museum in New Orleans.
- “Kentucky Burgoo” is the celebrated stew served on Derby day.
- Catherine Bosley kept her job at Glenmore Distillery Company until retiring just in case they didn’t make it in the restaurant business.
- Back in the early 1940s, Moonlite was a gas station in an old one-car garage metal building.
• Honored in 2016 by Kentucky Living Magazine as the “Best Non Franchised Barbeque” Hall of Fame

• In 2015, named “The King” of Kentucky BBQ by Men’s Health Magazine

• Garden & Gun Magazine named Moonlite in their 2015 Barbeque Bucket List

• In 2013, the Southern Food & Beverage Museum in New Orleans inducted the cleaver and butcher knife wielded by late Pappy Bosley since 1963 as a permanent exhibit as reported in prnewswire.com

• Featured on Travel Channel’s show Bizarre Foods Travel Food Guide

• Andrew Zimmern, states “From the bone-in ribs to the loins and shoulders, [Moonlite’s] barbecued mutton is fantastic” in his 2013 write-up of his visit to film the show Bizarre Foods, Travel Channel

• Southern Living names Moonlite BBQ in the Top 50 BBQ Joints of the South, quoting “The Moonlite is a Kentucky legend, and it turns out an incredible volume of smoked mutton, beef, pork, and chicken from two brimming buffets. For me, though, it’s the burgoo—tangy and soothing with a rich mutton bite and peppery finish—that’s the real star of the show”

• Southernfoodways.com features an interview with Ken Bosley that is published in the Kentucky Barbecue Book released by the University Press of Kentucky

• CNN’s eatocracy.com references Moonlite’s famous mutton, Owensboro’s International Bar-B-Q Festival, and the Southern Foodways Alliance in their article “Mutton, pork butts and burgoo – an intro to Kentucky barbecue”

• Featured barbecue restaurant for Kentucky Tourism

• Named among the Top 23 best BBQ restaurants in America by www.timeout.com

• Blog.foodenetwork.com features Moonlite’s Mutton Dip in their May 2012 “Liquor Gold: Regional BBQ Sauces”

• Moonlite voted Best Bar-B-Q in Kentucky by Kentucky Living and Kentucky Magazine

• Voted Best Restaurant Service in 2010 by Messenger-Inquirer

• Featured three page article in 2011’s The Lane Report, KY Business News Source noting Moonlite’s revenue to hit around 7 million that year

• One of the 12 Holy Grails of Barbecue by Popular Plate Magazine, 2010

• 2005 AAA Diamond Rated Restaurant Award

• Named among the South’s Best Restaurants in Southern Living Bar-B-Que, Our Ultimate Guide in 2003

• Featured in Gourmet Magazine’s 2003 “A Guide to America’s Roadfood” stating “Western Kentucky is a nexus of great barbecue and Moonlite is its shining star”

• Named “10 Most Popular Spots in Kentucky” in 2003 by Travelocity (selected from over 40,000 members)

• Feature article in LA Times, June 26th, 2002 by Charles Perry. “Mutton is just Older, Wiser, Tastier Lamb”

• Featured in USA Today in June 2001 among the best barbecue in America

• In April 2001, USA Today listed Moonlite as one of the 10 great places to fill your plate

• Featured in Entertainment Guide’s “Moonlite Bar-B-Q Tradition” by Clint Hadden of Messenger-Inquirer on July 6th 2001

• Kentucky.com names Moonlite in 2001 as “gold standard of Kentucky barbecue”

• According to Gourmet Magazine, Moonlite’s famous buffet is “spectacular” and “puts Owensboro barbecue in a class by itself.” Published, July 2000

• The Associated Press coverage in 2000 of President Clinton’s visit “President Clinton speaks at Owensboro School and visits Moonlite barbecue restaurant”

• Featured article in Money issue 1999, “Fixed in Place” by Paul Lukas

• Kentuckytourism.com names Moonlite BBQ as main stop for Kentucky Heritage Culinary foods
Moonlite to feed about 15,000 at Toyota picnic

By Keith Lawrence

Moonlite Bar-B-Que Inn is staging its biggest production this week.

About 45 employees from the Owensboro restaurant and a temporary crew of about 20 workers hired from the Louisville and Lexington areas will be feeding between 14,000 and 15,000 Toyota workers and their families Saturday at the company's annual picnic in Georgetown.

"This is a major production," says Jeannie Heath, Moonlite catering manager. "We literally set up camp in Georgetown."

In the last five years Moonlite has been catering the Toyota picnic, the serving line has grown from 2,000 to 14,000 people, said Ken Bosley, Moonlite vice president.

"I don't think they knew what they were getting into," laughs Carol Fryman in Toyota's employee relations office. And the serving lines are likely to continue growing as the company grows, she said.

This year's picnic is on the grounds of a former convent and runs from 11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., she said.

Actually, this is one of the restaurant's easiest catering jobs, Heath said.

"I worry about Toyota the least," she said. "Last year, it went off without a hitch."

Barbecue is prepared on the Moonlite pit on West Parrish Avenue and reheated in Georgetown. Everything else is prepared in Georgetown, Heath said.

The menu includes 6,000 hot dogs.

See Moonlite Page 3C

Moonlight from Coast to Coast

5,000 hamburgers, 5,000 boneless chicken breasts, 3,000 pounds of baked beans, 2,000 pounds of barbecue beef and a first this year, 200 pounds of chopped mutton.

"We've had requests from people who used to live in this area," Heath said. "So this year, we're having a Daviess County Mutton Lovers' Line." Fryman said some Toyota officials had eaten at Moonlite a few days before the first picnic was planned.

And, she said, a former Owensboro man was working in the human resources department then.

"He said, 'If you're going to have barbecue, it's got to be Moonlite,'" she said. "And they've had the job ever since."

Twenty-five workers will leave Owensboro next Friday morning. Twenty more will follow in the afternoon. Both will be in convoys of vehicles carrying all the equipment for the event.

A few workers will be on site all night. Others begin arriving at 4 a.m. Saturday. Everyone will be hard at work by 6:30 that morning, Heath said.

"We've got it down to a science," she said.

Keep reading for more article clippings...
Mutton Is Just Older, Wiser, Tastier Lamb

By CHARLES FERRY
TIMES EAST COAST

One big piece of meat until half-done. Take it out of the oven, gash it to the bone in several places and rub it with salt and cayenne; save the juices. Then throw this multiply-buttered chunk of protein, like a foil of steaksaked together, on the grill until good and red brown. Add the saved juices in a relish of pickled mushrooms.

"These days a scarcely need to be told," wrote Eliza Acton in "Modern Cooking for Private Families," "this is an excellent dish".

The year was 1845. The dish was the Cavalier's Roast. And even though its instructions run counter to much of what we now take for granted in cooking meat, it's so utterly efficient and its flavors so modern, it could have been invented yesterday.

In fact, there may not be a better way to cook leg of lamb. The Cavalier's Roast has a dark, tasty crust, a juicy medium-rare interior and an elegant, uncluttered seasoning. Best of all, it needs only 20 minutes on the grill.

A simple, but delicious recipe for a meat that is scarcely part of our tradition anymore: How to cook the cut of lamb instead, just as you can in other mutton recipes of 19th century India, for instance.

All these objections go double in our country, where it is not enough to have a luscious lamb, but where we look for something extra in the way of style. But mutton will even more than usual, this is more milder lamb flavor.

Real Kentucky Barbecue

The exception to the trend is Owensboro, Ky., located near the Ohio River, Indiana and Kentucky. To the outside world, Owensboro is probably best known as the hometown of less than 5 NASCAR drivers, including Michael and Darrell Waltrip, or maybe as the headquarters of the International Blues Music Association. To itself, it's the barbecue capital of the world—and when they say "barbecue" in Owensboro, they mean barbecued mutton.

The area was settled in the early 1800s by people from Wales, who had sheepherding in their blood. (Every town, there are usually four sheep per person in Wales—15% of the sheep in the European Union.)

On top of that, the tariff of 1816 had encouraged an American wool industry. Between one thing and another, there were more than 11,000 sheep in Daviess County by the 1860s.

From time to time, the mutton had to cut old sheep from their flocks, and some—local—were vague about how this happened—barbecuing came to be the main way of cooking the meat. Though mutton does show up in the local version of Kentucky barbeque, a stew of mixed meats.

Along the way, mutton barbecue became important church fund raisers. Owensboro's first recorded mutton barbecue, in July 1934, was held at a Baptist church, but local Catholic church. A few years later, other local Catholic church—particularly active barbecues by Frank Griffith ("Jealous Schuster") and the Barbecue American Cookbook" by Rick Broadway and Jack Bert Sotir.

To the leading of the Kentucky area's many barbecues, comes the Moonshine Bill. The Moonshine Bill, country mutton, is the introduction of the national barbecue chains, such as products of Welsh descent salted legs of mutton to roast it, said Eliza Leslie in her "Influential Directions for Cooking" (1837): "when dressed otherwise, it is tasty and not so good as mutton."

When Mutton Was King

Back then, by the way, people would have been amused by the modern cult of ripe lamb. "Lamb, like veal and pork, is not edible unless thoroughly done," wrote Leslie; "so we prefering it to be done is generally the case with beef and mutton."

Nearly 60 years later, Fannie Farmer would agree.

Of course, much depends on what you mean by "lamb" and "mutton." In the past, a lot of lamb was spring lamb, 6 to 8 weeks old, though the meat of animals up to one year still counted as lamb. The USDA now considers 12 months the dividing line between lamb and mutton. The French raise the bar to 14 months, and onmels with sheep farmers, mutton commonly begins at 18 months. At least everyone agrees that a 5-year-old mutton is probably too old and tough to cook.

There was a whole repertoire of regional mutton dishes, such as Irish stew, Scotch broth and Lancashire hotpot (a casserole of meat layered with potatoes). People of Welsh descent salted legs of mutton and after that, all the barbecues of America's century-old mutton tradition. While sheep meat seems to have made its debut in North Carolina and Kentucky, where Owensboro barbecue should be around a long time.

Mutton by Mail

The reason for having a buttering operation, complete with a resident USDA inspector, on the

The Cavalier's Roast

Active Work Time: 25 minutes + Total Preparation Time: 1 hour, 20 minutes

to give an idea what mutton cooking was like, here's a recipe adapted from Eliza Acton's "Modern Cookery for Private Families" (1865): the dish had been known at least 100 years before that. In the absence of mutton, we used lamb.

1 lamb

1 (5 pound) shoulder or half of leg of lamb or mutton

3/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

test

12 teaspoons seasoned salt

1 cayenne pepper

1/4 teaspoon ground ginger

1/4 teaspoon mace or nutmeg

Salt and cayenne bring out flavor.

1/4 teaspoon mace or nutmeg

2 cayenne pepper

Salt

1/4 teaspoon mace or nutmeg

2 tablespoons seasoned salt

1/2 cup apple cider vinegar

1 cayenne pepper

Salt and cayenne bring out flavor.

Pickled Mushrooms

Freshly cooked medium-rare, 25 to 30 minutes, or until a meat thermometer registers 140 degrees. Serve from the grill and let sit until sizzling hot. Serve with the lamb.

6 to 8 servings. Each of 8 servings:

391 calories; 300 mg sodium; 122 mg cholesterol; 28 grams fat; 12 grams saturated fat; 2 grams carbohydrates; 32 grams protein; 0.59 gram fiber.
Road Notes: Kentucky Q

"You all gain' buffet!" the waitress asks as she sets down suites of silverware (each wrapped in a paper napkin) and a pair of sauce pitchers on the table of our booth.

In the tradition of an old-time southern pig-pickin', the buffet at the Moonlite Bar-B-Q in Owensboro, Kentucky, is spectacular. It occupies its own dedicated room, with meats and vegetables on one side, salads and desserts on the other. Never have we dipped a plate when there wasn't an employee replenishing ribs or dishing drips of ham-cabbage hash off the counter.

What's special about a western Kentucky barbecue buffet is the variety of meats. Most of America's famous barbecue scenes specialize in just one kind: beef sausages in East Texas, pork shoulders in South Carolina, ribs in Chicago. In Owensboro, they've got it all, and at Moonlite, it is all good. There are chicken and ribs and pulled pork, even a pan of nonbarbecued sliced country ham that is firm and salty and fits so well into Moonlite's buttery dinner rolls, with maybe a dab of sorghum. (Beyond meats, we'll just mention the impressive deployment of "vegetables," including cheesy broccoli casserole, macaroni and cheese, creamed corn niblets, ham and beans, and butter-dressed mashed potatoes, plus the western Kentucky stew/stew beef known as burgoo.)

The beef brisket is sensational. It is sliced a half inch thick and has a chewy crust blackened by hours in the pit. But the interior is butter-soft, with some quivering veins that appear to be meat but that are so infused with long-cooked fat that they literally melt on the tongue in a torrent of pure, noncorporeal meat-smoke flavor.

Mutton puts Owensboro barbecue in a class by itself. Cooked until pot-roast tender, it's set out on the Moonlite buffet two ways: chopped or pulled. Neither has sauce on it; you apply your own at the table from the pitchers the waitress brings. One is a dark-orange emulsion with gentle vinegar-tomato zest; the other is called "mutton dip," an unctuous gravy that is used to baste the mutton as it cooks. For those who need heat, Moonlite also supplies bottles of "Very Hot Sauce," which is brilliantly peppered and will set your lips and tongue aglow. But we recommend sampling this meat sauceless. The chopped mutton is pulvzerized to nothing but flavor: tangy lamb and wood smoke in a bold hash duet. The pulled version is a textural amusement park—tangled and chunky with a bit of hard outside crust among soft, juicy chunks of tender meat that fall into shreds so supple they make us want to abandon all utensils and eat like happy cave dwellers. —J. & M.S.

MOONLITE BAR-B-Q
2840 West Parrish Avenue, Owensboro, Kentucky
Tel. (270) 684-8143

BON TON-STYLE FRIED CHICKEN

Serves 4
Active time: 45 min Start to finish: 25 hr

Bilko's spice mix is a closely guarded secret, but Donna King shared with us its fundamental ingredients as well as the basic technique—a long marination, at least 24 hours. This results in some of the juiciest chicken we've ever eaten. The chicken must also rest five or ten minutes after being dredged in the seasoned flour to, as King told us, "get doughy."

The Bon Ton recipe calls for Accent (monosodium glutamate) in both the marinade and the dredging mixture. We tested it with and without, and the chicken mainly tasted saltier with the Accent, which some people preferred.

For dredging
3 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon salt
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon cayenne
1 teaspoon white pepper

For marinating
1 qt water
2 tablespoons salt
2 teaspoons cayenne
2 teaspoons garlic powder
1½ teaspoons white pepper
1 tablespoon soy sauce
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce

4 chicken breast halves, 4 thighs, and 4 drumsticks (all with skin and bones; 4 to 4½ lb total)

For frying
About 12 cups vegetable oil

For dredging

For marinating

For frying

For dipping

For serving

For marinating

For frying

For dipping

For serving

For marinating

For frying

For dipping

For serving
ONE AUTUMN day a few years ago, I found myself in central Wisconsin with only one afternoon left on my vacation and two places I desperately wanted to visit. If I went north, I could go to Hayward, home of the highly touted Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame; if I went east, I could check out some eateries in Sheboygan, the self-proclaimed Bratwurst Capital of the World. With no time to do both, it seemed like an impossible choice until my travel partner brought a bit of perspective to the situation. “I’m sure the Hall of Fame would be fun,” she said, “but compare that to the chance of having a meal we might remember for the rest of our lives.”

End of discussion. As this anecdote handily demonstrates, an army isn’t the only thing that travels on its stomach. Good food—especially regional specialties not available back home—should always be a priority when traveling. And since America features so many distinct culinary cultures, there’s no shortage of regional delicacies to sample. Many have become fairly well known over the years—by now everyone’s aware that Chicago is the place for deep-dish pizza and that New Orleans is where it’s at for gumbo. Some, like Buffalo chicken wings and Philly cheese steaks, have even spread throughout the country, securing a spot on our national menu.

But if you really want to find America’s true flavor, check out some of the regional specialties that have never caught on outside their own geographic bases or garnered widespread notoriety. These small, localized food subcultures—like Sheboygan’s bratwurst outlets—may not be as famous as, say, the crab feasts of Baltimore, but they’re every bit as interesting and tasty. In fact, because these less conspicuous food scenes have largely been ignored by the tourist crowd, their trademark dishes have not been corrupted, compromised or watered down like so many of their more celebrated counterparts.

My favorite overlooked food scene centers around Binghamton, NY, the only place in the U.S. where you’ll find spiedies, an excellent dish available at bars and restaurants all over town. Spiedies (“sped-eez”) are meat cubes—usually pork, but lamb, beef and chicken are sometimes used—that have soaked in a mixture of oil, vinegar, herbs and spices known as spiedie sauce. After marinating at least overnight and often considerably longer—the meat is skewered, grilled over charcoal and served with a piece of squishy Italian bread, which you then use as a mat to remove the hot cubes from the skewer. The result is a simple and remarkably tasty sandwich.

Spiedies are generally acknowledged to have originated with Binghamton’s once sizable Italian immigrant population, although historical specifics are sketchy. In any case, ground zero for spiedies today is Sharkey’s (56 Glenwood Ave.; 607-729-9201), a well-worn venue with a lively bar up front, some homey booths in the back and, in an odd decorating touch, a horseshoe crab mounted on the wall. The menu features everything from pizza (awful) to pierogies (pretty good), but serious chowhounds go to Sharkey’s for the spiedies, which are Binghamton’s best. Figure two or three skewers per person to start—but the marinade is so potent that spiedie addiction soon kicks in, at which
10 great places to fill up your plate

Revoluting Tables Restaurant
Mendenhall, Miss.

Hopkins House
Pensacola, Fla.
Another Southern boardinghouse, “When you walk in, you’re pointed to a table for 10 to 18 people, and before you hit your seat, you are surrounded by platters of fried chicken, hot biscuits, sweet potato soufflé and a dozen other Dixie specialties.” Type: family-style. Price: $7.75. Try: fried chicken, yellow squash, pancakes. 850-438-3979.

Blue Willow Inn
Social Circle, Ga.
“This is a spectacular, grand Southern mansion where you can eat to your heart’s content. No matter how big an appetite you have, you cannot taste some of everything unless it’s really teensy-weensy.” Type: buffet. Price: $9.95-$16.95. Try: fried chicken, fried green tomatoes, collard greens. 770-464-2131 or www.bluewillowinn.com.

The Nordic Lodge
Charleston, R.I.
“The place to go if you’re a lobster lover.” Gorge on succulent crustaceans and all manner of seafood, plus heaping portions of filet mignon, prime rib and pork ribs. Type: buffet. Price: $47; less for kids. Try: lobster. 401-783-4515 or www.nordic-lodge.com.

Louis’ Basque Corner
Reno
“All you can eat in the style of the Basques of northern Spain. It was long-standing tradition for Basque shepherds to come down from their pastures in the winter and stay in hotels throughout northern Nevada, and some of those towns still have restaurants that serve these vast feasts.” Type: family-style. Price: $16.95, including wine; $8.95 for kids. Try: lamb, a Basque favorite. 775-323-7203.

The White Way
Restaurant/Cafe
Durant, Iowa
A salad lover’s dream. There are 20 items, free with a regular menu meal. “The main menu item is the pork chops, but the real thrill is a shot at the salads. People pile their plates ridiculously high.” Type: salad buffet. Price: free with meal; $4.95 a la carte. Try: salad bar. 319-785-6202.

J&T Sweatman’s
Rossville, S.C., near Holly Hill

Catfish ‘N’
Dardanelle, Ark.
The deep-fried balls of cornmeal known as hush puppies got their name because “you could toss one to the dog while cooking and it would shut up!” Type: buffet. Price: $10.95; less for kids. Try: catfish and hush puppies. 501-229-3321.

Phil Smidt’s
Hammond, Ind.
Who knew you could get frog legs anywhere but a French restaurant, let alone all you can eat? “They’re also known for their fried lake perch with the secret recipe.” Type: all-you-can-eat on certain items. Price: $36.95. Try: frog legs, lake perch. 800-376-4534 or www.froglegs.com.

Gluttony, the ancients warned, is a sin, but those abstemious ancients never supped at America’s plentiful buffet restaurants. Michael and Jane Stern, authors of Roadfood, who have supped many times, say all-you-can-eat is still one of America’s best deals – and the food’s pretty darn good, too.

Buffet-style means you get up and load your plate from groaning tables. Family-style means you sit at huge tables and the eats come to you.

Michael Stern shares with USA TODAY’s Maria Puente the couple’s picks for buffets and family-style eateries around the country. Note: Hours differ; check first.

MOONLITE BAR-B-Q
TRADITION

By Clint Hadden
Messenger-Inquirer Special Publications

Moonlite Bar-B-Q Inn
2840 W. Parrish Ave.
(270) 684-8143

tradition (tre dish en) 1. The handing down orally of stories, beliefs, customs, etc.
from generation to generation 2. long established custom or practice that has the effect of an unwritten law
— Webster's Dictionary

In 1963, Hugh and Catherine Bosley purchased the Moonlite, then a popular, small bar-b-q establishment that first opened in the 1940s. Since then, Moonlite has grown into a remarkable family business. Hugh and Catherine, along with four of their children and several grandchildren, have created a bar-b-q institution.

Moonlite now requires more than 120 dedicated staff members to operate the multifaceted business. This includes a 350-seat restaurant, a busy carry-out department, a USDA-inspected processing plant, a catering department practiced at serving 15 to 15,000 with unparalleled quality and professionalism, as well as a wholesale division that produces, distributes, and ships bar-b-q and related products throughout a 4-state area. All this from that 30-seat roadside restaurant the Bosleys bought in 1963.

The restaurant, featured in national magazines like "Gourmet" and "Southern Living," has made the pages of newspapers around the country, and has even hosted a president.

The real center of attention, of course, is the food, especially the buffet, so big it has its own room.

You can heap your plate with barbecued mutton, pork, chicken, beef, and ribs, plus delectable side dishes, including expertly-seasoned vegetables, fresh salads, homemade desserts and blue ribbon pies.

The atmosphere is neighborly. Most of the staff have been with the restaurant for years and treat their customers like old friends. The prices are reasonable, with the buffet price increasing as the weekend approaches and the selection increases.

The Moonlite continues to earn awards and recognition. For the second consecutive year, the Moonlite topped Kentucky Monthly's "Kentucky Best" survey in the "best bar-b-q" category.

Buffets are served daily, although hours change through the week.

Lunch buffet: 11 a.m. - 2 p.m., Mon. - Sat.
Dinner buffet: 4 - 9 p.m., Mon. - Thurs.
Sun. buffet: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Clinton speaks at Owensboro school, visits Moonlite barbecue restaurant

by JAMES PRICHARD
Associated Press Writer

OWENSBORO — While her students at Audubon Elementary School dressed casually for a 45-minute speech there by President Clinton, Chase Jourdan's appearance made a two-word statement: Secret service.

The fourth-grader was tired Wednesday like a miniature version of the agents who adow the president's every move. Chase sported a set, double-breasted suit, white tie, a white shirt, a silver-and-black tie and a pair of black shades that mostly stayed in his pocket.

Picture Haley Joel Osment in "Men in Black." When Chase told his family he wanted to dress up like Secret Service agent when the president spoke at his school, he went out Monday and bought the entire outfit.

"The day that I thought of it, went right out to get it," said ase, who will turn 11 on Saturday.

Best of all, a real agent spotted Chase and gave him a secret Service pin that the boy xed to his lapel.

"It's pretty cool," Chase said.

It was among about 10 stus — and about 550 people gether — who listened to Clinton speak in the Audubon auditorium about education re and the need for turning and low-performing schools.

Among those in attendance was Education Secretary Condoleezza Rice, Gov. Paul Patton, Gov. Steve Henry, former Sen. Wendell Ford.

wensboro was the first stop on a two-day, four-city tour that would take the president to Davenport, Iowa, later in the day and to St. Paul, Minn., and Columbus, Ohio, today.

Clinton praised Kentucky for its education reforms of the past decade and singled out Audubon, once a poorly performing school, as a model to which underachieving schools in other less-than-affluent areas should aspire.

"This school is now the 18th-best performing school in the state despite the fact that two-thirds of your students qualify for free school lunches," he said. "That is truly amazing."

He called on Congress to support his $250 million education accountability program, saying it would provide states and school districts with resources to help reverse the direction of failing schools.

Afterward, Audubon principal Diane Embry said she believes the president feels strongly about improving the nation's public schools.

"I gathered that he really has a passion that all kids should achieve at high levels," she said. "That's a passion for education that you have to have."


"We all must be concerned with education, but I am also concerned with President Clinton's Washington-knows-best approach," Lewis said. "While education is primarily a state and local responsibility, federal funds account for about 7 percent of all education spending. These dollars must be spent in our classrooms, not bureaucracies, and allow for more local control."

After visiting the school, Clinton and his entourage stopped by the Moonlite Bar-B-Q Inn and left with a giant carryout sampler of barbecued mutton, ribs, chicken and pork, complete with all the trimmings.

The president was too pressed for time to eat, so he instead shook hands and posed for pictures with many of the restaurant's 325 lunchtime customers.

"He just visited with every single person in here," said Ken Bosley, who co-owns the Moonlite with several family members. "It was just unbelievable."

The president spent about an hour at the restaurant before leaving Owensboro. When it became known last week that Clinton would be coming to town, it was widely assumed he would drop in for lunch at the Moonlite, which is nationally known for its barbecued mutton.

But it wasn't until 11 a.m. CDT Wednesday — 15 minutes after Clinton arrived in Owensboro — that the Secret Service notified the restaurant that Operation Barbecue was a "go."

Bosley is chairman of the Daviess County Democratic Party and his wife, Moretta, is a member of the Democratic National Committee. But Bosley insisted that the president's visit to the eatery was strictly gastronomic in nature.

"It's a proud day for Owensboro and a proud day for Daviess County and a proud day for the Moonlite," Bosley said.
Owensboro shows off its hospitality

President Clinton got a taste of Moonlite Bar-B-Q

By Kristina Goetz
The Cincinnati Enquirer

OWENSBORO, Ky. - It’s the kind of hometown welcome most big city folks know little about.

But when the first president to come to Owensboro since Harry Truman was on his way, there was plenty to do to make sure Owensboro did its best to show its hospitality to the president.

Schoolchildren made signs and some donned homemade Uncle Sam hats to welcome President Clinton.

The library displayed books about U.S. presidents on its tables. And a group of students from Daviess County and Apollo high schools laid out their best jazz performance for the president, including a rendition of “New York, New York.”

But the biggest unofficial event of the day was a presidential visit to the Moonlite Bar-B-Q Inn, which includes a restaurant world-famous for its mutton and ribs.

All week, the town had been hearing rumors that the president might make a stop there. The Secret Service had visited earlier in the week. It is owned by the Bosley family, a well-known Owensboro clan that includes Ken Bosley, the county’s Democratic chairman.

Mr. Bosley said the restaurant had saved a special seat for Mr. Clinton, in a back room with no windows, but the president got take-out.

“No, people said, the president won’t come to Moonlite. But, to everyone’s surprise, he did.

Moreta Bosley, a member of the family that owns the restaurant, said the family did not know of the president’s visit until yesterday morning.

“They kept telling us if the crowd was too big he wouldn’t come,” Bosley said. “But this morning, when (the Secret Service) brought the dogs in, we figured he was coming.”

By 11:30 a.m., clumps of people were lining up outside the restaurant, where the president sat. People and Secret Service agents had already closed Moonlite to new customers, and were trying, with limited degrees of success, to set up a perimeter around the restaurant.

As time passed, the scattered clumps of spectators formed into continuous lines on both sides of Parrish Avenue west of the restaurant. Marian Howard and Michelle West skipped their lunch hour to wait for the president.

“We wanted to go to Moonlite,” Howard said. “My mom called and said, ‘Try to get over there and eat lunch so you can at least touch him.'”

Clinton went in, the place was packed, and he began working the room, shaking hands, posing for pictures, moving slowly from the entrance into the main dining room and past the buffet lines and into the rear dining room.

Meanwhile, people in the back dining rooms waited, some standing on chairs to see better, for the president to come their way.

Clinton spent about 40 minutes in the restaurant, but never got a chance to sample the food.

“What surprised me,” he said, “was how much the president took the time to shake the hand of everyone in the restaurant,” Bosley said.
MOONLITE BAR-B-QUE INN HAS BEEN NAMED BY LOCALS AS ONE OF THE 10 MOST POPULAR SPOTS IN KENTUCKY

Selected from over 40,000 Travelocity Member Entries, Moonlite Bar-B-Que Inn Made The Travel Service's Official List Of “Local Secrets, Big Finds”

Owensboro, Kentucky (May 23, 2003) – Straight from the locals’ mouths, Moonlite Bar-B-Que Inn has been recognized as a top hot spot in the state by residents of Kentucky. **Moonlite Bar-B-Que Inn** was chosen among more than 40,000 member entries as one of only 10 places in Kentucky to be named one of Travelocity’s “Local Secrets, Big Finds.”

Ranging from beaches and lakes to restaurants and bars, Travelocity’s comprehensive collection of local hot spots was compiled after querying customers from Travelocity’s 40-million member database. Culled from thousands of responses, the Local Secrets, Big Finds list reveals those hidden gems across the country where the locals like to go, many of them spots that ordinary tourists likely do not know about or could easily overlook.

More Details on Travelocity’s Local Secrets, Big Finds List

From more than 40,000 customer responses regarding what the best spots are in the area, the travel service narrowed the list to create Travelocity’s Local Secrets, Big Finds and is sharing them with vacationers across the country. A total of 510 spots, that is 10 picks for every state, plus Washington, D.C., were compiled from around the United States to create the final list.
“This must be where Jesus had the last supper, because literally the only thing better than the meal I just had is inheriting the kingdom of Heaven.” - Louie B

“What an AWESOME place. Love that mutton. I have never gotten a bad meal there—always fresh and on POINT. I HIGHLY recommend Moonlite. You can’t make a trip to Western Kentucky and not eat Moonlite Mutton.” - Scott P.

“Here from out of town and by far best food ever!! I will definitely be back. Even if it is a 6 hour drive.” - Travis C.

“No matter where I have called home.. I always travel the distance to eat the world’s best barbecue at Moonlite. And the staff and owners are so friendly..” - Randy F.

“The food is only surpassed by the people who serve you there...we drove up from Alabama to try their barbecue mutton and burgoo...Roll Tide...all three are winners.” - Marvin O.

“Moonlite is absolutely unparalleled in its food or service. If you are anywhere close, do yourself a favor and stop by. You will not be disappointed.” - Mike R.

“A place like this is a treasure. Mountains of good country cooking piled high on the buffet table. A legacy stretching back generations, with roots deep in the community.” - John W.

“The only bad thing about this place is there's only one.” - Dana F.

“Yesterday on my way home to Elizabethtown from Evansville, I decided to stop in. It was after 4 pm on a Sunday and they should have been closed but Ken Bosley met me at the door with a "Closed" sign in his hand and told me to come in anyway. He served me personally and put together a "to go" platter for me based on what I liked. Great hospitality, super kind and the food was delicious!” - Walter C.

“Best Bar-B-Q there is. I drive 80 miles just to eat there.” - Kevin S.

“Moonlite is our favorite ‘ride to eat’ destination! We live about 2 1/2 hours away, but go there several times a year, especially in the Summer when we can ride with the top down. Beautiful drive with delicious food waiting!” - Greg & Mary J.

“For all you pilots that don’t know, fly into OWB and have the FBO call them. They will be there in just a few short minutes. Great $100 BBQ flight.” - Kevin K.

“Every single item on the buffet is absolutely awesome.” - Roger S.

“You'd fight a man over it; without a doubt this is the best bbq joint in the bluegrass! The mutton is outstanding, and the cherry cobbler you wouldn’t share for love or money.” - Chris G.

“Most delicious, out of this world BBQ and sides. If you visit the beautiful state of Kentucky you must visit . Ask for Jeanie and request a behind the scenes tour. She's gracious, charming...5 plus stars.” - Joy L.

“Awesome! My second visit, drove 4 hours just for lunch! Introduced a friend to the buffet. Brought back items from the store, will definitely be back.” - Janice S.

We prepared for the blizzard today in Pennsylvania by pulling Moonlite BBQ out of our freezer as a treat for lunch! Thanks for a great lunch and for your easy on-line order form! - Peter H.
Pappy came from an era when most Americans dreamt of owning their own businesses and being their own bosses. Through hard work, Pappy was able to fulfill this dream and also lay a foundation for multiple generations to come. Our expanded enterprise now boasts carry-out, extensive catering, an online store, a USDA-inspected processing plant, and a wholesale division. As an authority in barbecue, we’re always looking to expand all facets of the business.

Three generations of Bosley ownership:
- Ken Bosley, 2nd Generation Owner
- Patrick Bosley, 3rd Generation Owner
- Chris Bosley, 3rd Generation Owner
- Jeannie “Bosley” Heath, 3rd Generation Owner

Management staff:
- Mike Clark, Catering Manager
- Scott Howard, House Manager
- Tracy Phillips, Purchasing Manager

Carry-Out
Need a quick lunch or dinner for the family? Our fast-paced carry-out department serves the local Owensboro area with a complete take-out menu, offering everything from sandwiches to by-the-pound meats. Just inside the restaurant, you’ll also find a large selection of canned and bottled products, T-shirts, hats, cookbooks, and specialty items.

Catering
Our catering has expanded well beyond the barbecued mutton that has made us famous to include a complete, customizable menu. We’ve catered such elaborate events as the wedding reception for the son of Senator Wendell Ford, to large corporate functions including the Toyota Motor Manufacturing Company picnic. Our catering truck frequently visits the Louisville-Lexington area and as far away as New York, where you can find us serving mutton and barbecue at the Big Apple Block Party in New York.

Online Store & Products
Since our loyal customers come from all over the world, we offer our most requested products by mail order service or online purchasing through our website www.moonlite.com. Order your favorites anytime and have them shipped throughout the United States right to your doorstep.

Wholesale Foods Division
Our wholesale division delivers USDA-inspected meats to restaurants, grocery stores, schools, and food businesses within our local region—Bowling Green, Paducah, Evansville, and Louisville—and even as far away as Texas. Because Moonlite is U.S.D.A. inspected, sanitation and health considerations are taken seriously and tours of the plant are not easily available.

From L to R: 1. Third generation Bosley and Catering Manager, Jeannie Bosley Heath 2. Anyone can go to the online store and order their favorites right to their doorstep. 3. Moonlite fan products, including shirts, shoes, hats and more, are for sale online & at the restaurant store. 4. Our catering goes beyond the barbecue, specializing in weddings, holidays, and corporate events. 5. Customers come by to pick up their orders at our carry-out for dinner.
With a philosophy of helping people to help themselves, Moonlite management has been active with and/or served on the Board of Directors/Advisory Board for the following organizations:

- American Cancer Society
- Brescia University
- Cliff Hagan Boys' Club, Inc.
- Girls, Inc.
- Goodwill
- International Barbeque Festival
- International Music Museum
- Junior Achievement
- Kentucky Restaurant Association
- Kentucky Wesleyan College
- Owensboro Community College
- Owensboro-Daviess County Family YMCA
- Owensboro-Daviess County Tourist Commission
- Owensboro Municipal Utilities
- Owensboro Museum of Fine Arts
- Owensboro Museum of Science and History
- The International Bluegrass Museum
- The International Bluegrass Music Association
- The Owensboro Chamber of Commerce
- The Owensboro-Daviess County Hospital
- Western KY Botanical Garden
- Western Kentucky University

The Bosley family also sponsors the Children's Garden at Western Ky Botanical Garden, in memory of Hugh (Pappy) & Catherine Bosley. Providing a wonderful place for children of all ages to have fun and learn about nature, some thematic gardens have included a Butterfly garden, a Zoo garden, a Pizza garden and a gourd teepee.
Customers from near and far come to visit our family table and as grandma would say, “there is always room for more!” We welcome the local media the same way by responding quickly to inquiries and sharing information for crafting interesting and informative stories.

Marketing & Public Relations
Patrick Bosley, Marketing & Public Relations
1 (270) 684-8143
1-800-322-8989 (toll free)
Patrick@moonlite.com

Restaurant Location & Hours of Operation
Moonlite Bar-B-Q Inn
2840 W Parrish Ave.
Owensboro, KY 42301
Get Directions

• Lunch Buffet served 11:00 am to 2:00 pm
• Dinner Buffet served Monday - Thursday from 4:00 pm until 9:00 pm and Friday & Saturday 3:30 pm until 9:30 pm
• Sunday features our famous brunch buffet served from 10:00 am until 3:00 pm

Our Family Fanbase
Online @ www.moonlite.com
Like us @ facebook.com/MoonliteBarBQ
Follow us @ twitter.com/MoonliteBarBQ