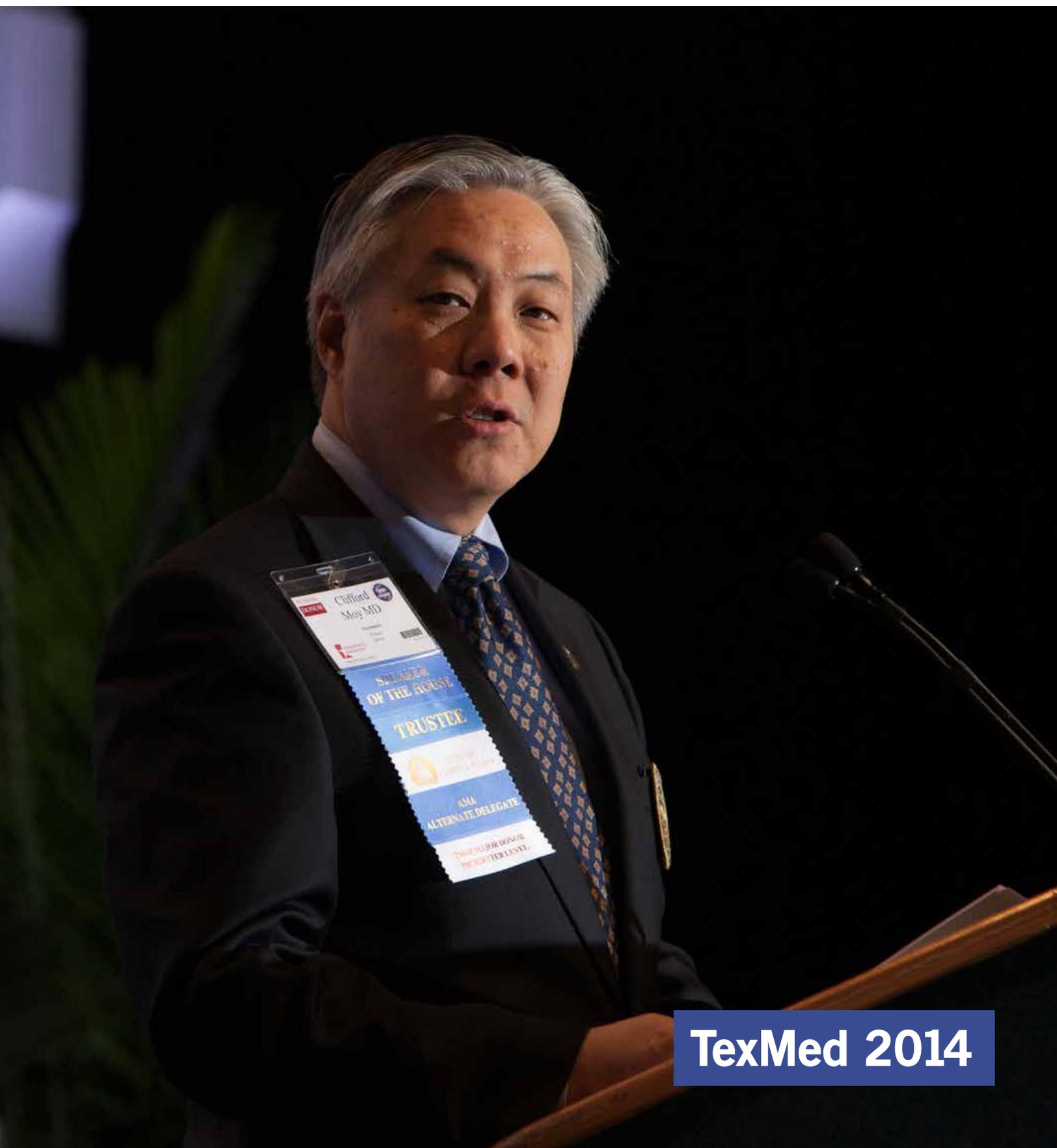


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# President's Page

## Sometimes in life, you have to stop and smell the 'cue

by Todd Pollock, MD



Over the last several months, I've covered some deep subjects. I've talked about my growing concerns for our healthcare system, the death of a friend, the critical shortage of organs for donation, and plans for a disaster with mass casualties that overwhelms our medical resources.

It's time to move on to a more enjoyable subject. And no subject is more enjoyable than food, especially when shared with friends and family. Summer is upon us, and one of my favorite holidays is around the corner — the Fourth of July. Yes, I'm a patriot and love celebrating the birth of our great country, but I also love barbecue. I love eating it. But I love cooking it just as much. And no other holiday, save Thanksgiving, gives me the opportunity to show off my skills. So I'm going to share my recipe for ribs. I've spent years honing it, and nothing would please me more than sharing it.

### Barbecue Primer

Not everyone is a seasoned barbecue chef, so I'll start with a primer. For more information, I refer you to the book "How to Grill" by my favorite BBQ author, Steven Raichlen. This covers the basics, plus a lot of good information and recipes for even the advanced griller.

This brings up an important distinction — the difference between grilling and barbecuing. Grilling is cooking directly over a high-heat fire. This chars the meat's surface and locks in the juices. Grilling is relatively quick. In barbecuing, the heat is indirect, temperatures are low and cooking times are long. "Low and slow" is the motto of the barbecue chef. Smoking is the extreme form of barbecue where the fire may not even be in the same box as the food, the temperatures are lower, and cook times can be measured in tens of hours.

Whether you're grilling or barbecuing, the fuel can be gas, charcoal or wood. Most of us use gas because it makes cooking quick and clean, and fits best in our fast-paced, busy lives. I grew up using gas, and barbecue chefs can do some fine cooking on a gas grill. But many years ago, my friends from residency, John and Shellie Josephs, invited the family over for New Year's. John, my leader in all things grilling, cooked steaks on his charcoal grill. One taste of a charcoal-grilled steak, and I was hooked. I never went back to gas. I have an expensive gas grill that is used mostly to store my barbecue tools, except for the occasional quick meal when time is of the essence. Although cooking with charcoal requires a little more time and getting used to, I encourage you to give it a try. You won't be sorry.

My pride and joy is my Primo XL (Figure 1), a ceramic grill modeled after the clay ovens that have been used in the Far East for millennia. It has thick ceramic walls and a tight seal to make it heat evenly and lock in moisture. The more well-known version of this type of grill is the Big Green Egg. I use Texas mesquite lump charcoal for the fuel and a mixture of pecan and mesquite wood for the smoke. Temperature is adjusted by opening or closing the vents at the bottom and top.



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This recipe is described for my charcoal grill, but you can do the same general procedure on a gas grill.

### Let's Grill Some Ribs

1. I typically use baby-back ribs. Some will argue the importance of using the highest quality meat from a high-end butcher. I'm not sayin' they're wrong, but I usually buy my ribs from my local warehouse club, and I've had no complaints.

I season them in layers. I start with a generous application of barbecue rub. (I have made rubs from scratch from Steven Raichlen's book but usually buy it off the shelf.) Next, I layer on some red pepper for a little heat and then a generous amount of brown sugar for some sweet. This gives it a sweet and spicy flavor that mixes perfectly with and complements the smoke flavor. Cover the ribs and allow them to sit in the refrigerator for several hours (or even over night). **Figure 2**

2. Set up your grill for indirect grilling. This means that the heat source is on one side of the grill and the meat is on the opposite side. Shoot for a temperature of about 275 – 300 degrees. **Figure 3**

3. Place the ribs in a rib rack and apply maximum smoke. I soak the wood chips (preferably, wood chunks) for a few hours to saturate them. A generous amount of chips placed on the coals creates a steady, thick smoke that infuses the meat with that wonderful flavor and creates an aroma that drives your guests (and the neighbors) wild. Keep the lid on and cook for 45 minutes to an hour. **Figure 4**

It is imperative that the temperature stays consistent, so "never desert your post" (Commandment No. 10 of Raichlen's 10 commandments of perfect grilling). But don't fret — this is the best part of the process. It is of utmost importance that your spouse understands that you cannot do any chores or honey-do's, or be bothered during this process. (Next time we can discuss cooking a brisket, which requires 8 hours or more of this laborious process.) Only a cold beer can ease the pain and tension. **Figure 5**



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4. Wrap the ribs tightly in foil to keep them moist. I add a little barbecue sauce, a bit more rub, brown sugar, and a splash of Dr Pepper (secret ingredient) before sealing. This keeps things moist and sets in the flavor. Cook in the foil for another 30 minutes. **Figure 6**

5. Finally, take the ribs out of the foil, apply barbecue sauce and cook directly over the heat until the sauce cooks on. This takes just a few minutes. **Figure 7**

6. Remove from the heat and allow to "rest," loosely covered with foil, for about 15 minutes. This important step allows the juices to settle into the meat.

7. Carve and eat. **Figure 8**

8. Serve up. **Figure 9**

Two more satisfied customers! **Figure 10**

I thought for a long time about what lessons we could take away from the barbecue process. Patience? Sure. Creativity? OK. Sharing? You bet. But what resonates most with me is that in our fast-paced world, it's important to just stop and smell the barbecue. Bon Appétit, y'all, and have a happy Fourth. **DMJ**