

food
network
magazine



MICHAEL'S
GRILLED
STEAK



ANNE'S
BEST
PESTO



INA'S
FISH
TACOS



**MIX UP YOUR
MARGARITAS!**

LET'S MAKE
Cookies!
BONUS RECIPE BOOKLET INSIDE

EASY
MEALS
ALL MONTH
(Done in minutes!)



104
GREAT
RECIPES



**FUN WITH
TEX-MEX**

TOSTADAS, GUAC & MORE!



Mini
PARTY
SANDWICHES

HEY, CHOCOLATE LOVERS: SEE PAGE 45!

MAY 2018 \$4.50



BRISKET SMOKING

BRISKETU

\$74 for a three-hour class;
brisketu.com



HOUSTON

Brisketu is not exactly a typical college. At this class we're seated at picnic tables instead of desks, we're surrounded by beer (which we get to drink in the middle of the lesson) and our professor, Scott Valdiviez, shows up wearing a baseball cap and an apron blackened by smoke. He's a welder by trade, but he spends his weekends competing in barbecue cook-offs—and teaching barbecue lovers like me how to smoke brisket,

Texas-style. Some students have traveled from overseas; others were sent by spouses who got tired of throwing away overcooked meat. When Scott is done with us, though, we will impress every future cookout guest with our new title: Certified Backyard Pitmaster.

The real appeal of Brisketu is that you can learn in an unimposing environment—there's no one waiting for dinner and no neighbors peering over your fence. In fact, there's no cooking at all. A 10-pound brisket can take up to 15 hours to cook and we're only together for three. Instead, Scott explains how to select meat, trim fat, make a rub, choose wood (pecan is sweet and mild, oak is smoky) and control the temperature in the smoker. In between beer breaks,



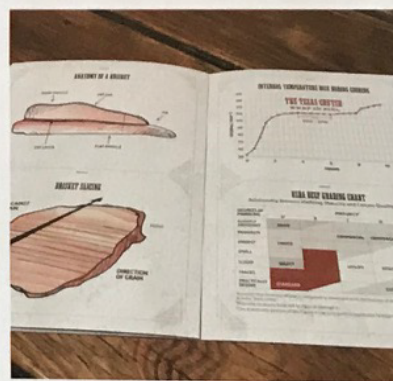
Francesca
Cocchi,
Editorial
Assistant

Scott demonstrates how to use a chimney starter (an essential skill for charcoal grillers), and his crew assembles stations where we can compare the smoke profiles of different kinds of kindling.

As 3 p.m. approaches, it's finally time to eat. We split into groups to watch Scott slice the brisket (against the grain), then we sample the flat and point sections. I wipe the juice off my fingers just in time to accept my certificate from Mike Albrecht, the "Dean of Smoke Studies." Since his first class two years ago, Mike has issued more than 4,000 certificates and expanded his courses to include ChickensU, RibsU and TurkeyU. Scott dismisses class, but most of us act like real college students and stick around for another beer.



The instructor trims excess fat to ensure even cooking.



Our pit-side pocket guide gets technical.



Each kind of wood infuses the meat with a distinct flavor.

IF YOU GO: Brisketu's classes are held at various breweries in the Houston, Austin and College Station areas. If you're signing up for a Houston class, consider the modern Hotel Sorella, which overlooks the bustling shopping destination CityCentre (from \$170 per night; hotelsorella-citycentre.com).