

SMOKIN' SUCCESS



Featuring: "Pigs•R•Us Bar•B•Que"

You just know Tommy Houston's smoked ham is going to be mouth-watering good.

Long before you get your first taste, this slow-cooked specialty of Tommy's PIGS•R•US BAR•B•QUE in Martinsville, Virginia is seducing your senses. The *smell* is heavenly. And it's *steaming*. And the *color!* Perfection. But that's only a teaser, because part of the experience is Tommy himself. The man knows barbecue.

He may know ham barbecuin' better than anyone on earth. And he sure in the heck knows how to work a crowd. Yet, for Tommy, it's just another day at the races. He is, after all, the official caterer to the Martinsville Speedway, which attracts more than 70,000 spectators to its NASCAR Winston Cup Races. And, for the BBQ U faculty, it is another opportunity to learn what makes America's most successful barbecue businesses successful.

There are two things Tommy Houston loves to talk about. His barbecue business, which he started from scratch, and high-speed auto racing. And, sure, we the *starving* faculty wanted to talk, but we *really* wanted to sample that famous Pigs•R•Us smoked ham.

Q: How did you get started in the barbecue business, Tommy?

A: Back in 1982 I was a fireman in Martinsville. One day we decided to have a barbecue for the firehouse and a few friends. But nobody volunteered to do the



Tommy Houston, official caterer to the Martinsville Speedway, says one of the reasons his Pigs•R•Us Bar•B•Que business in Martinsville, Virginia has been so successful is the efficiency and dependability of Southern Pride smokers.

cooking, so I gave it a shot even though I'd never done barbecue on a large scale.

I went at it whole hog — and a whole hog it was. We spitted that big sucker and I sprayed and basted it for the next 14 hours. Know what? Everybody said it was the best barbecue they'd ever tasted. That got me hooked. I decided to go into the barbecue business.

My first barbecue grill was a steel oil drum that I cut in half and turned into a primitive smoker. I decided, way back then, that I was going to specialize in smoking large whole hams, which no one else was doing and everyone seemed to enjoy. *Find a hole in the market place and fill it.*

As my business grew, I had to keep my equipment up-to-date. I swear I tried about every barbecue smoker made, but was never satisfied until I came across Southern Pride. With other smokers, there was just no end to the problems. They didn't get hot enough. Wouldn't maintain a steady temperature. Might cook the meat

unevenly. Once I even had the whole smoker catch on fire. But with Southern Pride, I have **no problems**. I mean that. **No problems.**

Q: What do you really like about Southern Pride equipment? (That ham sure smells good.)

A: I was looking for a smoker I could load with whatever I wanted, set the temperature and forget about it. With my old smoker, if I wanted to smoke something overnight, someone would have to check it every few hours — and that 'someone' was usually me. That was really stressful. But Southern Pride takes all the stress out of the smoking process.

Versatility is also a big advantage. With Southern Pride, you can cook so many different items — even several different kinds of meat at the same time. You can always count on even cooking and consistent flavor because there



is such precise temperature control. We can even cook without wood, which allows us to cook our cobblers in the same smokers we use for our hams. I'll tell you — without the versatility of the Southern Pride smoker we never could handle the NASCAR races at the Martinsville Speedway.

Q: Is being an official caterer to the NASCAR Winston Cup series in Martinsville a big responsibility? (Tommy, about that ham!)

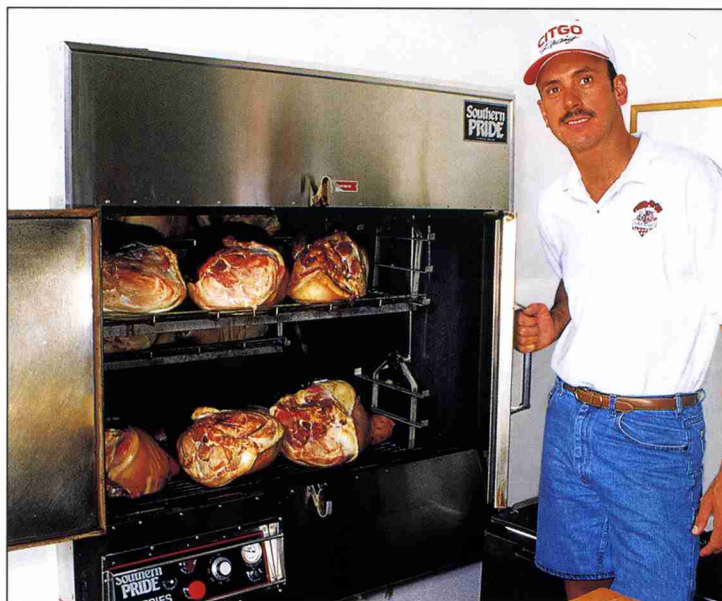
A: You bet it is. We do a lot of catering anyway, but when the races are in town, it's the biggest challenge of all. During the three race days we'll feed up to 3,000 people a day. That takes some organization.

Before the time trials start, we go out to the track and set up what I call 'Tommy's Little City.' We have three Southern Pride smokers there, along with my race car trailer filled with meat and other supplies. Our people move fast. We have to set up 25 buffets in the hospitality chalets of race sponsors and teams to serve a full range of our standard menu items. In addition, we have specially prepared gourmet menus for the luxury suites, which accommodate 48 people each.

For three days we keep those three smokers going night and day. If it weren't for the flexibility and versatility of those smokers, we would never be able to handle this kind of assignment. Know what? The people at the races just love it. If there's anything left on the buffet at the end of the day, it quickly disappears. People pack it up and take it home.

Q: You've developed quite a reputation for a unique barbecue specialty. The smoked ham! Can you tell us your secret?

A: There is no secret. It's the same thing I've been doing since I started. I use whole hams, big ones, around 20 pounds. I smoke them for 12 hours at 225°, and they come out like nothing you've ever



Tommy says his Southern Pride smokers can handle the big 20-pound hams with ease — and the meat comes out perfect every time.

tasted before. *You're right about THAT.* For the most part, I smoke them with hickory or cherry. This is not your stringy, pulled pork. I use a special chopper to chop it up into small chunks. We serve it with a thin Worcestershire and vinegar-based sauce and mmmmm-um — it is downright delicious.

That doesn't mean I don't cook other things. I do ribs and chicken, and I guess I've tried everything else along the way. But I always come back to hams.

You know, here's something — some people don't believe I can cook these hams the way I do. At a convention once, some guy almost accused me of lying to him. He told me I couldn't cook 20-pound hams in a Southern Pride cooker. I said, 'Mister, here's the phone number of my restaurant in Martinsville, and the name of my cook. You call him and ask what he has on my two Southern Pride smokers right this very minute. If he doesn't say hams, I'll give you \$100. Deal?' Know what? The guy never made the call.

Q: If someone else wanted to get into the barbecue business and asked about Southern Pride smokers, what would you say? (Say, 'Have some of this ham, please!')

A: Are you kidding? Look, it took me 15 years to find out about Southern Pride.

Three years ago I got my first Southern Pride smoker. Now I have five. Nothing else even comes close. And Southern Pride helped me expand my catering business.

Of course, other people are using other brands, and I suppose they're getting by. Believe me, Southern Pride is the Cadillac of cooking. You just can't do any better than that.

But besides dependability and versatility, Southern Pride smokers are easy to load and unload. The rotisserie ensures even cooking, where other grills tend to cook one side more than the other. These

smokers are easy to clean, too, and easy to service.

That's something else — when it comes to service, I can't imagine anyone doing a better job than Southern Pride people. All I have to do is give them a call. If I need something, they ship it right then. Our guy [the Southern Pride rep] is Steve Walker. He and the other Southern Pride people, know the barbecue business because they've been in it themselves.

Well, to answer your question, I'd tell anyone who asks, Southern Pride eliminates the worries and stress. You can concentrate on your business...making great barbecue. And that's what this business is all about.

Say, let me fix you a couple plates of the house specialty. Y'all hungry?

For additional information about Southern Pride, please call Steve Walker at 800-851-8180.

**Southern
PRIDE**

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