

NORTH CAROLINA BBQ: EAST VS. WEST

North Carolina is known for some serious barbecue. Depending on where you are, you'll get a taste of Eastern or Western style. Not sure what the difference is? Check out below!

WESTERN-STYLE PORK SHOULDER: SWEET AND SMOKEY

In the western half of the state, the BBQ has two distinct differences:

1 FOCUSES ON PORK SHOULDER

The emphasis is typically on the pork shoulder or pork butt rather than the whole hog. It is often smoked and then chopped or pulled.



WESTERN
NORTH CAROLINA



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THE ADDITION OF KETCHUP IN THE SAUCE

Western-style BBQ (also known as Lexington-style) uses a vinegar-based sauce, but it includes ketchup or tomato, giving it a slightly sweeter and richer flavor.

The pork shoulder meat captures the rich smoke from the wood and coals, and the tomato adds a hint of sweetness.

EASTERN-STYLE WHOLE HOG: SPICY AND TANGY

Eastern N.C. BBQ is classified by two things:

1 COOKING A WHOLE HOG

The whole hog is usually cooked, and the meat is pulled apart and served. This style emphasizes cooking the entire pig, including the shoulder, ribs, and even the head.



EASTERN
NORTH CAROLINA



2

SPICY, VINEGAR-BASED SAUCE

Eastern-style BBQ uses a vinegar-based sauce, sometimes with red pepper flakes, and is typically thinner, with no tomato base. It highlights the natural flavor of the pork with minimal sweeteners.

While smoking, the pig is basted with the sauce, which tenderizes and flavors it. Extra sauce is served tableside.

Want to know where Carolina Mustard Sauce, aka Carolina Gold, fits into all of this?

Despite the name, this tangy, mustard-based BBQ sauce actually hails from South Carolina, not North! It's a flavorful twist on tradition with a history all its own.

