

## Kosher-for-Passover Smoked Brisket

By Cantor Jason Green

*Read this whole article/recipe well in advance of trying it – it takes planning, time, effort, and some confidence that you can do this! (You can do this!)*

Brisket is the culinary opposite of matzah (and maybe that's why brisket is a 'thing' on Pesach!): matzah must be cooked in under 18 minutes from start to finish and is dry and mostly flavourless; brisket must be cooked low-and-slow (low temperature for many hours – 8 to 14 hours, depending on the size of the brisket), and it's juicy, hearty, and packed with delicious flavour!

My aunt Wendy makes the best braised brisket! But my favourite way to cook brisket is to SMOKE it. I use a Traeger pellet smoker, but you can accomplish a similar flavour sensation on other kinds of smokers, charcoal BBQs, and (to a slightly less-smoky extent) on gas barbecues using a separately purchased smoker tube and pellets (we'll get to that later). Most people have gas grills, so I'll proceed on that basis.

How do I make my brisket kosher-for-passover? Firstly, all your ingredients should be marked with the special Passover *hechsher* (kosher symbol), and ingredients that don't need a hechsher (like sugar) should be brand new packages kept unopened until your kitchen and BBQ are kashered for Passover.

There are different rabbinic opinions on kashering BBQs. The easiest is to use a brand-new grill! Second best is to meticulously clean your BBQ's firebox both by scrubbing and by running the BBQ on very high heat for 15 minutes (some would say blow-torching until the surfaces are red-hot for a few moments) so that food particles are so charred that even a dog wouldn't eat them, and replacing the cooking surface (the grate) with a brand new one.

My favourite cut is the "point", also known in Canada as the "Second Cut". It's a piece of fat-marbled muscle that runs on top of and perpendicular to the much leaner "flat" (or "First Cut"). And the good news is, the point is about half the price of the flat because most Jews want the leaner cut for braising! With a long cook, you want a bit more fat to give the meat it's 'juiciness'. If you are cooking for a bigger crowd, go with a combination of the point and flat, known as "Full Packer", "Double Brust", or "Double Brisket". You can distinguish the boundary between the two parts by the triangle of fat between them. You can actually cut some of that fat away to shorten cooking time a bit.

First, prep your rub the night before you begin cooking. The rub gives flavour, colour and texture (called the "bark") to the outside of the meat, and the flavour seeps in for beefy, salty-sweet goodness. I use the following rub recipe for up to a 5 pound brisket, but you can adjust freely to make more or less rub:

- ½ Cup paprika
- ¼ Cup chili powder (this doesn't add spiciness)
- 3 Tbsp brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp kosher (course) salt
- 2 Tbsp garlic powder
- 1 Tbsp onion powder
- 1 Tbsp black pepper (use half that if you are spicy-averse)
- 1 tsp cayenne pepper (optional – gives it some extra spiciness)

Rinse off and dry your brisket by patting with paper towels. In a disposable baking tin, apply the rub liberally to all surfaces of the brisket, rubbing and patting it into the meat. Cover the meat with plastic wrap and put it in the fridge until an hour before cooking time.

You'll need to calculate your cooking time, to know when to start. Generally count on 1.5 hours per pound, plus 1 hour to do BBQ prep before cooking, and 2 hours to rest the meat afterward (which allows fats to redistribute through the leaner parts). Why does it take so long to cook? Brisket is a terribly tough cut, and cooking low-and-

slow allows the fibers to soften, some of the proteins to denature, and the fats to render, thus tenderizing the meat to melt-in-your-mouth goodness.

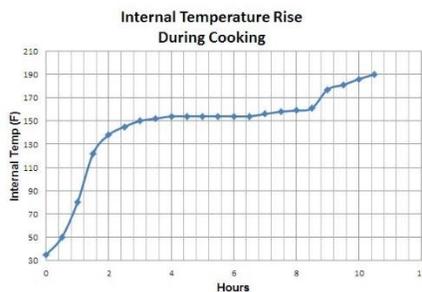
We're going to try to cook with *indirect* heat. Put your seasoned meat on your grill, all the way to one side. Re-purpose the baking tin by filling it with cold water, and put it all the way on the other side of your grill. It will steam during cooking, keeping the firebox humid, the meat moist, and helping smoke molecules stick to the meat. You'll need to monitor the brisket's internal temperature – our target is 205°F (96°C). Ideally, use a digital probe that constantly allows you to monitor temp. Alternatively, use an instant-read meat thermometer every once in a while (particularly around the last third of the expected cook time).

Fill a smoking tube like [this one](#) 4/5 full of hickory smoking pellets (available at Canadian Tire or Home Depot). [Here's how you light it](#) (you'll need a blowtorch kit, also available at Home Depot). Give it a good 5 minutes of flaming time before you blow out the flames in favour of smouldering.

You'll need careful positioning of the smoker tube. Don't put it over your gas flame or it will just catch fire and burn at high heat. I like to position it either between the water pan and the brisket (but as far away from the brisket as possible), or between the water pan and the *front* edge of your BBQ, again avoiding any open flame.

Once your tube is lit and in place, turn on a *single* gas burner, the one farthest from the meat (it should be under your water pan) to the lowest setting. Close the lid and let the temperature of the grill stabilize for about 20 minutes, and adjust the burner to give you a steady 275°F (135°C) inside the BBQ. Never let your temp rise much above that as the sugars will burn and your meat could dry out. Let the meat cook for 4-5 hours without opening the lid. Then you can measure the internal temp periodically.

You will probably notice that around 155°F (68°C), your internal temp will stop rising, and may even fall a little... for hours! That's called "the stall", and your mission is to just ride it out, don't turn up your temp!! It's required for full tenderization. The graph below shows a typical stall's timeline.



When the temp starts to rise again, you'll need to check the temp more often (every 20-30 minutes) because it can quickly jump up to or above 205°F (96°C), turning your meat grey and mushy and drying it out.

When it gets to final temp, pull it off the grill, double-wrap it in (butcher paper, if you have any, and) aluminum foil, wrap that in a towel, and pop it in a camping cooler for up to 3 hours to "rest". Once the BBQ and the water-pan has cooled for at least two hours, carefully empty the water pan and re-purpose it once again as your brisket re-heating vessel.

After resting, carefully open your wrapping and transfer the juices to the baking tin. If you've smoked a double brisket, separate the point and flat with a sharp knife. They'll both need to be cut against the grain for maximum tenderness, and since they're perpendicular muscles, the only way to do that is slice them separately. Slice to your desired thickness, place the slices in the baking tin. You can either serve immediately, or cover with tin foil and put in the fridge, or even freeze it (but not for more than a few days). Reheat (defrosted) meat in your oven at 300°F/150°C for an hour or so and serve with the juices.

Bon Appétit! Chag Kasher V'sameiach!

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