

Giant Barbeque Cooker Serves Up To 1,000 At A Time

By Bill Gergen, Senior Editor

"I've been around barbeque for a long time and have built several cookers for pork, beef, chicken and anything else you might want to barbeque. Now that I'm getting closer to retirement I decided to build one that's big enough to serve up to 1,000 people at a time," says Dave Barrett, Chrisman, Ill.

The one-of-a-kind giant cooker is built on a tandem axle trailer and measures 24 ft. long, 5 ft. wide and 8 ft. high. On top are four 14-in. sq. metal cupolas painted red with black roofs, making them look like small barns. The cooker weighs 10,080 lbs. and comes with a spare tire mounted on front. Barrett uses a 1-ton Ford 4-WD pickup to pull it.

Barrett designed the cooker, but he didn't build it. "My shop doesn't have the big press brakes or shears needed to build this cooker and torching the sheet metal doesn't look as nice, so I had a local machine shop build it. I bought the tandem axles, and then they built the cooker from the ground up. One guy told me it looks like we could drive the cattle in the back of the trailer and take the cooked steaks out in front."

The cooker comes with five 4 1/2-ft. wide compartments along one side. The 3 middle compartments are for cooking, while the front compartment is a storage unit and comes with a slide-out table. The fourth compartment is also used for storage, and the back compartment is a refrigerator unit. Most of the cooking is done with propane, using three 100-lb. propane cylinders that mount on front of the cooker.

"The second compartment is actually a big oven grill that's used to cook side dishes like au gratin potatoes and green beans. You could bake cookies in it if you wanted to," says Barrett.

The third compartment is a wood burning smoker oven. "The wood is piled into a metal basket, and a furnace burner underneath shoots flames up to light the wood and control the temperature," says Barrett. "Burning wood gives the meat a smoky flavor. I didn't want to use lighter fluid to start the wood because if you don't get it on at the right time you can taste it on the meat."

The 8-ft. high cooker ended up being a lot taller than Barrett expected. "As we were building it, the machine shop suggested we slope the roof to keep water from ponding. The sloped roof resembled a barn roof, so we decided to add 'barn' cupolas on top. Each barn cupola has a smoke stack inside it. The cupola on back is just for looks."

Barrett has also built several other cookers including a one-of-a-kind 3-pole, wood burning rotisserie that's operated by an electric motor and can cook up to 60 5-lb. chickens at a time, and a pitchfork fondue that's used to deep fry ribeyes, beef tenderloins, and pork tenderloins. "We put the meat on a pitchfork and dip it in soybean oil before deep frying it," he says.

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Dave Barrett designed this barbeque cooker that's big enough to serve up to 1,000 people at a time. It comes with five 4 1/2-ft. wide compartments along one side.



Giant cooker is built on a tandem axle trailer and measures 24 ft. long. On top are four 14-in. sq. metal cupolas, painted red with black cupolas on top.



Barrett also built a 3-pole, wood burning rotisserie operated by an electric motor (above) and a pitchfork fondue (left).

They're Trying To Save Rare White Deer Herd

"No date has been announced for a decision, but we should hear soon," predicts Dennis Money, president of Seneca White Deer Inc. (SWD), a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the largest-known population of white white-tailed deer in the world.

The decision Money refers to is what will happen with the fenced-in 7,000-acre former Seneca Army Depot in upstate New York that's home to a herd of 200 rare white deer. It's also a rich ecosystem of shrubs, hardwood forest, birds and diverse wildlife.

The depot was built by the War Department in 1941 to house munitions. Development of the site displaced 130 farm families. Thousands of men and women built 519 bomb igloos, 140 miles of roads, 40 miles of rail and 24 miles of perimeter fence.

"Three bids are being considered for the land, one of which is ours," says Money. "The other two, as I understand it, are for agricultural development."

The white deer owe their existence to the rusting chain-link perimeter fencing that went up when the depot was built, capturing several dozen wild white-tailed deer in the area's extensive woodlands. The white deer are a natural genetic variation of normal brown white-tail deer. They're not albinos, which lack all pigment, but are leucistic, lacking pigment only in their hair.

The SWD plan calls for partnering with the town of Varick to preserve 3,000 acres of the depot site with the goals of promoting ecotourism, minimizing human impact to the environment, and benefiting the local community. SWD's proposed park would feature guided tours and programs focused on environmental education, energy conservation, military history, wildlife

photography, horseback riding, camping, and scientific research.

"We think we have a good plan that will perpetuate the deer herd, be good for the region, and lead to economic development for the community," says Money.

The SWD website offers an interactive map that enables viewers to zoom in on various areas of the depot to view all 519 of the depot's former earth-covered igloos and to see how the site might be developed to attract tourists and preserve wildlife.

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The former Seneca Army Depot in upstate New York is home to a herd of 200 rare white deer, the largest known population in the world.

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