

## BBQ&A: Jubon's David Rosen

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Riddle me this: What do you get when you mix four New York Jews, [Ubon's](#) competitive cooking team from Mississippi and the Big Apple Barbecue Block Party?

The answer: Jubon's.

David Rosen, the central force behind Jubon's, was kind enough to fill us in on the crew's backstory, the barbecue competition experience and NYCQ.

### **BBQ Jew: What's the full story on how Jubon's came to exist and can you explain the name thing for those who don't know?**

**David Rosen:** I had just finished standing in a very long line for a plate of Memphis style pulled pork from Ubon's Barbeque at the 2007 Big Apple Barbeque Block Party in Madison Square Park. As I was eating I commented to one of the guys pulling pork, "This is terrific." Allen Campbell, member of the Ubon's cooking team, replied, "You know, you're eating that all wrong...." I responded "Then I'll get back in line and do it the right way." Instead Allen brought me up onto the trailer, within arm's length of Ubon's smokers, and taught me – everything on the plate, goes on the bun – especially the cole slaw. David and his family spent the next four hours visiting with Allen, Garry Roark, Leslie Roark Scott, and Brian Campbell.

Allen, Leslie and I stayed in touch and the Ubon's family invited me to bring some friends to the Memphis in May World BBQ Championship in 2008. We booked hotels and got airfare; we were coming to Memphis. But, we didn't know what to expect. The hospitality we received extended past a friendship and into the realm of family.



*Gotta love that tagline*

Three weeks after Memphis in May 2008, on a sunny, hot NYC June day, Me and my future teammates: Brian Jay, Adam Rosen and Bob-O Livingston, suited up in cotton and disposable gloves and joined Ubon's on Madison Avenue for the 2008 Big Apple Barbeque Block Party. We found that our passing interest in the art of barbeque had turned into a passion for smoke.

Over the next year, plans were made for Jubon's to enter Memphis In May's 2009 "Patio Porkers Division" and cook ribs to be judged. We chose the name Jubon's to honor our mentors (Ubon's) and our heritage. First, t-shirts were made, then, the rub and ribs were developed and perfected. Ubon's

helped get a smoker, tent, tables, fence, Ubon's BBQ Sauce and raw ribs to Memphis.

Jubon's weathered rain, wind, mud, heat, humidity, and a new smoker, not to mention putting together a blind-box for the first time. They had great ribs, but didn't make it to the Finals. They missed being in the top three by 0.3 of a point (which they would learn after the awards ceremony). Then, out of nowhere, a little bird brought great news for those four Jewish kids from NYC— Jubon's would get up on stage. The boys from NYC received a 4th place trophy!

**BBQJ: What are a bunch of nice Jewish boys like yourselves doing cooking pork—did you grow up digging on swine?**

**DR:** It's safe to say that none of us grew up with any dietary restrictions in our houses. We all grew up in Reformed Jewish households and ate pork.

**BBQJ: When was the first time you had real barbecue? What went through your mind as you ate it?**

**DR:** Wow, what a great question... I'm really not sure. I can remember going to Tiffany Gardens in NJ when my brother and I were kids for ribs, but was it real BBQ (cooked low and slow with smoke)? I'm not sure. After graduating law school I went on a cross-country trip where I sampled BBQ from all over the Nation, especially Texas. It was on this trip that I really fell in love with the flavor of smoke. When the meat melts in your mouth and you can taste the smoke and "love" that went into it, there is no better feeling in the world.



*The Ju(bon's) Crew (with David in the middle)*

As for team member Brian Jay: My mother grew up in Kansas City, KS so as a kid every summer we would go out to visit family in KC for a week. We had a few traditions of places that we HAD to eat at while we were in town. So after getting settled in we would take a trip down to the Jazz District to get lunch at the famous Arthur Bryant's BBQ. I remember ordering at the counter and looking into the pit and being in complete awe of what they were doing and then tasting the amazing bbq. To this day, anytime that I am in KC, I have to make a trip to Arthur Bryant's to get lunch — nothing has changed, the food is still amazing and I still look at the bbq pit in awe of what they do.

**BBQJ: As fellow Jews in this here barbecue game, we would like you no matter what. But you guys are actually holding your own in the world of competitive barbecue. What's the secret to your success? I promise not to tell (anyone who doesn't read this).**

**DR:** It took a tremendous amount of trial and error. We spent a ton of time making various rubs and remaking them and doing it again. I am not going to tell you what's in our rub, but I will say that you

cannot be afraid to try different spices. After all, to have success in anything you need to stand out from the rest of the crowd.

As for our BBQ sauce, we haven't reinvented the wheel. In fact, we use Ubon's commercially available BBQ sauce and doctor it up a bit with this and that. I highly recommend anyone just getting into this game to find a sauce they like and make it their own. Ubon's BBQ Sauce is available directly from Wal-Mart (at least in the South) and from the restaurant directly ([www.ubons.net](http://www.ubons.net)).

It must have looked very funny to the casual passer-by. Four guys on a balcony in NYC cooking BBQ ribs on a Webber Charcoal Kettle grill. That's right, we don't even own a real, professional smoker yet. All that being said, we wouldn't be anywhere without our friends and mentors at Ubon's. Between Garry, Leslie, Allen and Brian we have gotten the best BBQ education available. Between the four of them, they have already forgotten more about BBQ than I may ever know.

**BBQJ: Is there anywhere in NYC that serves passable 'cue (NYCQ)? If so, where? (And please don't say Justin Timberlake's place)**

**DR:** Now you are really putting me on the spot. Over the past 6 years many new BBQ restaurants have opened up in NYC. It's the "hot" new thing. That being said, it is extremely difficult to make really good commercial BBQ. Okay, I'm done hedging here's your answer: We have eaten at and enjoyed RUB, Fette Sau, Hill Country, Rack & Soul and Dinosaur BBQ.

**BBQJ: If you guys keep doing well in competitions, might you change the team's name to Jewbon's? Please?**

**DR:** There are a few reasons we will probably never change the spelling of the name. First, we can't do it because we want to keep the Ubon's in Jubon's. We would be nowhere without them. Second, we need to always be mindful that there are many out there that may be offended by what we are doing and there is no need to throw it in their faces. I was approached by someone at the Big Apple BBQ Block party who told me that "I'm going to rot in hell." I responded, "Oh, I won't rot, there's plenty of Kosher salt in there to keep me well preserved."

**BBQJ: What's your take—is there a prayer over the 'cue?**

**DR:** I'll be honest, there is no religion in our BBQ; other than the fact that the four of us happen to be Jewish.

**BBQJ: Hypothetical question here—let's say Memphis in May was moved to the fall and fell on Yom Kippur. Do you pitch or sit out the game?**

**DR:** Well, then it wouldn't be Memphis in May. The answer is no. I have never worked on Yom Kippur and don't ever plan on it. Sandy Koufax got that one correct.

**BBQJ: As soon as we create it, you guys are going into the Jewbecue Hall of Fame. Congratulations, how do you feel?**

**DR:** That is the coolest thing I've ever heard! I don't think we ever felt like anything like that was ever possible.