



(Image above) 'Weslodge Block' board (dubai) which features wagyu sliders, braised short ribs, chargrilled baby chicken and jumbo tiger prawns.

SMOKE & FIRE

Us Brits love a BBQ. When the mercury drifts above 21C, it's our cue to shimmy the grill out of the shed, dust the mildew from the garden furniture, and hotfoot it to the nearest farm shop or butcher's counter to bulk buy piles of meat, floury white baps, ketchup and a few bottles of our favourite tippie.

"People are cooking with larger cuts like a traditional American smokehouse would do. With the sales of smokers on the rise, we've seen people wanting Boston butts. 5-10 years ago you wouldn't have heard of that in this country!

Consumers are craving slow cooked brisket, short ribs and tomahawk steaks as opposed to the usual burger and sausage affair. According to Mordor Intelligence, 'barbecue' as a category looks set to grow by 3.7% in 2024, while sales of charcoal fired barbecues continue to dominate – accounting for a huge portion of market share (60% in 2022).



CHARRED
Move over burgers, sausages, and hot dogs – plants are claiming the spotlight, featuring charred caesar salads, burnt cucumber relish, and a spectrum of fruits like strawberries and peaches undergoing the transformative embrace of charring, smoking, and grilling. Fire takes centre stage in desserts, heralding the revival of flambéed classics such as rum baba and crepe suzettes.



FLAME GRILLED EVERYTHING
Venturing into the unexpected, flame-grilled ingredients extend to rice, grains, pulses, and even pasta. From torched tallow flatbreads to sophisticated techniques like smoking-then-charring potatoes, chefs are pushing boundaries by incorporating burnt elements to enhance depth, such as burnt flours in pasta and charred milk in ice cream.



NEW TECHNIQUES
Exploring exciting grill techniques and equipment, the binchotan brulee stands out, where caramelisation is achieved through direct contact with Japanese charcoal, adding a unique and captivating dimension. Chef Jan Ostle's herb sorbet with burnt meringue is a great example of how binchotan can bring out new flavours.

EAST VS WEST BBQ



WESTERN BBQ FLAVOURS

Kansas City BBQ Sauce
Flavour profile: This is probably the most widely spread version of barbeque sauce, a thick, flavourful sauce with a tomato base thickened and sweetened, often with molasses. Milder smoke flavour than southern BBQ sauces.

Tennessee BBQ Sauce
Flavour profile: A deep dark black sauce with a nice level of whiskey or bourbon, nicely tangy with a good bit of sweetness, and it has a slightly thin texture that's ideal for evenly coating your rack of ribs.

Texan Hickory BBQ Sauce
Flavour profile: Main flavour profiles of brown sugar, paprika and hickory Smoky-sweet blend of brown sugar, sea salt, garlic, paprika and hickory. Try it on brisket, pork shoulder, BBQ chicken.

EASTERN ASIAN BBQ

Korean BBQ Sauce
Flavour profile: Korean BBQ sauce is a variation of barbecue sauce. Instead of being tomato/ketchup-based, it is instead predominantly made from soy sauce, pear, and rice vinegar. Typically stronger spice notes with Miso flavour coming through.

Filipino BBQ Sauce
Flavour profile: A take on a classic sweet and sour BBQ sauce, with flavour profile of pineapple, Yuzu and orange. Very fruity flavour with a sour back note – which works well with classic fish and chicken dishes.

Japanese Gochujang BBQ Sauce
Flavour profile: Gochujang is a classic spicy Asian seasoning paste/-sauce. The ingredients include chili powder, fermented soybeans in the form of meju, and sweet rice. The jang in the name indicates that it's a sauce. This BBQ version has Molasses and brown sugar.



SOMETHING SWEET

From left to right: Grilled honey peaches with vanilla ice cream; Pina Colada brushed pineapple; Rum Cinnamon butter bananas.
If your grilling activity is limited to meat only, you are missing out! The intense heat from the grill helps to caramelize the natural sugar in fruit, making it even more delicious. Good choice of wood chips added to the charcoals also imparts some fruit smoke flavours – use applewood, cherry, both go really well with fruit!

KOREAN FEVER...THE K-DOG

Bunsik, London: Bunsik is a Korean street food shop that has garnered a loyal online following for its delicious and authentic Korean dishes, especially their "K-dogs". Due to their rise of popularity on TikTok they are known for having queues form down the street with an incredible selling rate of 1 k-dog every 20 seconds (The Guardian).

As social media continues to shape culinary preferences and consumer behaviour, the popularity of Korean food presents a unique opportunity for UK pubs and restaurants to innovate and thrive. With UK pubs being on a predicted 1.3% revenue decline since 2019 (Lumina Intelligence, 2022) embracing trendy fusion cuisine and leveraging social media platforms can help pubs can try stay ahead of the curve.



(see image above - This Korean BBQ sauce is built using standard ingredients for a typical sauce, but fortified with thick gochujang paste and sweetened with strawberry preserves www.chilli&smoke.com)



BBQ FLAVOUR TRENDS In addition to American smokehouse-style cooking taking off in a big way, Asian grills (such as Korean BBQ) are having their day. In fact, in 2023 Chinese barbecue became so popular that TikTok accounts putting a spotlight on the city of Zibo and its outdoor grilling techniques, led to it gaining the moniker 'the holy land of barbecue'. Officials began to lay on special BBQ trains to deal with the influx of visitors that ensued, and new food trucks sprang up to meet the unexpected demand. Most popularised are the city's shawarma-style charcoal-cooked meats (usually pork belly) served with wraps, crushed peanuts, spring onions, salad and various dips and dressings on the side for dunking – all of which feed into the kind of sharing, experiential dining moments consumers seem to be craving. Classic or Korean? The rise of the gochujang Korean style BBQ Sauce is appearing everywhere, everyone has a version or an infusion. Strawberry infused?