



# Grilling God: Tim Byres

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**Quick advice from the Dallas-based master griller**

By Matt Rodbard

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Tim Byres wants to teach you all about smoking, including with a pipe.

*May is **Grilling Month** at Food Republic, where we are offering pro tips from chefs and other well-known grilling gods.*

Before opening his acclaimed Dallas barbecue restaurant Smoke, **Tim Byres** cooked in the United States embassy in Belgium and at the posh Rosewood's Mansion on Turtle Creek. But it was a calling for “back to basics” cooking that yielded his acclaimed Oak Cliff’s barbecue pit, which he opened with partners in 2009. And just yesterday Byres [released his first book](#), which tackles everything from shucking an oyster to dressing a rabbit. Barbecue, however, is the focus, with tutorials and whole-hog smoking and building a backyard grill out of an oil drum. Tim Byres is a card-carrying Grilling God, which is why we tracked him down at last weekend’s [Austin Food & Wine Festival](#).

**Do you use charcoal or gas at home?**

I’ll do charcoal at home most of the time, but I would prefer real firewood. This spring we’re talking about building a little fire pit grill at our house, almost like one of those Argentinian things.

**You say firewood, but could it be any kind of wood?**

Hard woods. Hickory, oak or whatever you have around.

**What is the biggest mistake a home griller can make?**

Probably not trusting themselves. This is one of those things where you kind of have to learn to have a relationship with what’s going on. There’s no “turn it to 350 and come back in an hour and a half.” I think the other thing is just to have patience, especially if you’re smoking something for a long time. Have fun with it! You’re going to burn some things every now and then, but if you can hold your hand over the fire for a few seconds without burning yourself, that’s good to go for grilling steaks and searing fish.

**What’s your favorite cut of meat?**

Strip steak is nice and easy.

**What about drinking during the barbecue process at home?**

Everybody goes with beer. I don’t really drink anymore, so I’m a fan of lemonade and iced tea. Rose’s lime and watermelon juice is pretty awesome.

**Do you mess with vegetables on the grill?**

For sure. With the grilling thing, you deal with this abrasive flavor. This charred, smoky meat. You want to balance that well with acidity and crunchy and fresh. I do a lot of pickles and light-grilled vegetables. You almost want them still a bit raw in the center so there is some crunch to them.

**What’s the most useful piece of gear you can have as a home griller?**

A charcoal chimney. It’s so easy to set it and do it. You throw a couple of logs on and you have

this awesome fire. Sometimes, those sauté pans are kind of cool. I don't know what they call them but they are [perforated and you grill vegetables with them](#) so they don't fall through the cracks.

**Do you ever do Memphis in May or any of that competitive stuff?**

No, no, we don't do any competitive stuff. I'm going to the [Big Apple Block Party](#) this summer. I'll be working with Pat Martin. He's a friend who I've met through some of these things. We just take it as it comes!