

ST. LOUIS RIBS WITH BOURBON BBQ SAUCE

Cook: 156°F (68.8°C) for 8 to 12 hours • Serves: 4 to 8

Rich, smoky, and tender... ribs are such a fantastic food! I especially love St. Louis style, with its sticky, sweet sauce that clings to the ribs. This recipe combines my favorite BBQ sauce with excellent sous vide ribs for a delicious dish that people will be talking about for days.

Ribs are traditionally smoked until tender, but that often isn't practical due to time or location constraints. When cooking with sous vide the smoke flavor has to be introduced through other means. Briefly smoking the meat before sous viding it, using liquid smoke or pre-smoked ingredients like paprika, or a final run through a smoker at the end are the most common methods.

There are many different suggestions for how long and what temperature to cook ribs. It can be confusing but the time and temperature combination you want to use depends on how you'd like your final ribs to turn out. The hotter the temperature, the faster they cook and the more they tenderize. The amount of time you cook them for determines how tender they end up. These time and temperature combinations work for most kinds of pork ribs, including St. Louis cut, baby back, back, and spare ribs.

If you prefer traditional-style ribs, then cooking them at 160°F to 167°F (71.1°C to 75°C) for 4 to 10 hours is what you want. These ribs are flaky and falling off the bone. Sous vide them for 4 hours for ribs with a lot of bite to them and for 10 hours for ribs barely hanging on the bone.

For tender ribs that are more pork chop-like you can cook them at 141°F to 149°F (60.6°C to 65°C) for 1 to 2 days. They do not have the texture of traditional ribs but retain a lot more of their moisture.

Cooking the ribs at a temperature in between those two extremes results in firmer, but still flaky, ribs. They don't fall off the bone but they are much closer to traditional ribs. I often cook mine at 156°F (68.8°C) for 8 to 12 hours.

Ingredients

For the Ribs

2 racks St. Louis ribs or baby back ribs
2 teaspoons smoked paprika
2 teaspoons celery salt
2 teaspoons garlic powder
1 teaspoon onion powder
1 teaspoon ancho chile powder
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1 teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon mustard powder
Salt and pepper

For the Bourbon BBQ Sauce

2 cups ketchup
1 cup Bourbon whiskey
½ cup brown sugar
½ cup water
¼ cup balsamic vinegar
3 tablespoons chopped garlic
2 tablespoons ancho chile powder
2 tablespoons liquid smoke
2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
3 teaspoons chipotle chile powder
1 tablespoon molasses
2 tablespoons whole grain mustard

For the Ribs

At least 8 to 12 hours before serving

Preheat a water bath to 156°F (68.8°C).

Trim any silver skin or connective tissue from the ribs if you want. Mix the spices together in a bowl. Salt and pepper the ribs then coat with the spice mixture, you may have some spice mixture leftover. Place the ribs into sous vide bags, cutting the racks in half if needed. Seal the bags and then cook for 8 to 12 hours.

For the Bourbon BBQ Sauce

At least 30 minutes before serving

Whisk together all of the ingredients in a pot over medium-high heat and bring to a simmer. Gently simmer for 5 to 10 minutes and then remove from the heat. The sauce will last for several days in the refrigerator.

To Assemble

Preheat a grill to high heat or the broiler in the oven.

Remove the pork from the sous vide bags and pat dry. Brush the ribs with the BBQ sauce and sear them on the first side for a minute. Brush the BBQ sauce on the side facing up and turn the ribs. Repeat several times until it is coated with the glaze, cooking about 30 to 60 seconds per turn. Remove from the heat, brush once more with the glaze, and serve.