

Stop the Insanity: BBQ Pitmasters Told to Take Down American Flags

Nothing says America quite like smoking a pork butt and flying Old Glory.

“The sport of professional barbecue is extremely American and family oriented,” said pitmaster Jeff Petkevicius.

So you can imagine Jeff’s extreme displeasure when organizers of an Alabama barbecue competition ordered him—along with other competitors—to take down the American flags hanging from their barbecue trailers.

It happened Feb. 27 at the Sam’s Club National BBQ Competition in Daphne, Alabama, sponsored by the Kansas City Barbecue Society.

Jeff is the founder of “Give it to God” competition barbecue—a professional barbecue team that smokes meat and shares the love of Jesus. Both are noble missions.

Last Friday Jeff rolled into town with his barbecue trailer and promptly hoisted Old Glory. Not too long after, one of the organizers of the event told Jeff to take down the flag.

“There were six or eight of us that had flags flying,” he told me. “He went to each camp and told them to take the flag down and everybody did.”

The first rule of barbecue is low and slow—but the temperature started rising after Jeff complied with the directive.

“The whole time I’m thinking—the reason I fly the flag is because I love America,” he said. “I love what it stands for. It’s a way to say to our current and former troops—thank you.”

So Jeff had a change of heart and decided to raise Old Glor—as an act of defiance.

“It was a matter of saying there are things more important (than a barbecue competition),” he said. “If they want to kick me out—I’ll leave.”

Jeff was not kicked out and he was not asked to take down the flag. As a matter of fact—after he re-raised the flag another competitor followed suit.

So why were the patriotic pitmasters told to take down the flags?

Jeff said they were told by event organizers that the flags violated a city ordinance in Daphne. But that allegation turned out to be false.

“No one from the city advised or asked anyone to take down flags of any type,” Mayor Dane Haygood told me. “We proudly and boldly display American flags and we encourage everyone in the community to do the same.”

It turns out the order to remove the flags came from the tour director of the Kansas City Barbecue Society.

“As a measure of precaution, we asked everyone to take down any kind of signs or any kind of flags that were being displayed,” spokesman Mike McCloud told me. “It turned out that some of those happened to be American flags.”

Several years ago McCloud said there had been a similar issue in Daphne when “there was some official request made to take things down.”

“We wanted to be careful,” he said. “We like doing barbecue events in the South and we wanted to make sure we follow any local ordinances and procedures.”

McCloud said after they further investigated the local

ordinance—they eventually told the pitmasters they could fly their flags. So they investigated a local ordinance even though the city maintains there is no local ordinance banning the flying of American flags?

And why would the Kansas City Barbecue Society blame the city of Daphne—when in fact the city of Daphne did nothing wrong? It seems to me like they owe the mayor and the pitmasters an apology.

“I don’t know an apology is in order,” McCloud told me. “We’ve explained to the barbecue teams what happened. The city did not approach our event and ask us to do anything. We were cautious in our suggestion to people to be aware of issues and once we told people that we understood it better—that it was OK to post their American flags.”

The star-spangled banner has survived bombs bursting in air and the rocket’s red glare—only to be done-in by an ordinance that doesn’t exist.

As politically correct as our nation has become, I never thought I would see the day when American flags would be banned from a barbecue competition. That’s something you would expect to happen at a vegetarian cook-off.

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