

SMOKING WOOD PAIRING CHART

The Major's Definitive Guide to What Burns with What

"Post oak burns at a different temp than mesquite, and your brisket can tell."

WOOD	FLAVOR	INTENSITY	BEST FOR	AVOID WITH
Post Oak	Clean, mild smoke, slightly sweet	MEDIUM	Brisket, beef ribs, sausage	—
Hickory	Strong, bacon-like, sharp	HEAVY	Pork shoulder, ribs, bacon	Fish, chicken (overpowers)
Mesquite	Intense, earthy, bold	VERY HEAVY	Beef fajitas, grilling (not low-and-slow)	Anything long-cook — gets bitter
Pecan	Nutty, rich, mellow	MEDIUM	Poultry, pork, brisket (blend with oak)	—
Cherry	Sweet, fruity, mild	LIGHT-MEDIUM	Chicken, turkey, pork, duck	—
Apple	Sweet, mild, fruity	LIGHT	Poultry, pork, fish, cheese	—
Maple	Sweet, subtle, delicate	LIGHT	Poultry, vegetables, cheese	Heavy beef cuts
Oak (Red/White)	Moderate, versatile, clean	MEDIUM	Everything — the all-purpose wood	—
Alder	Light, slightly sweet	LIGHT	Salmon, fish, vegetables	Heavy red meats
Walnut	Heavy, bitter if used alone	HEAVY	Blend 50/50 with fruit wood for game meats	Anything solo — too acrid

THE MAJOR'S WOOD RULES

1. Season your wood. Green wood = creosote = bitter meat = disappointed Major.
2. Chunks over chips for low-and-slow. Chips burn out in 30 minutes. Chunks last.
3. Never soak your wood. You're making steam, not smoke. The Major has said this before.
4. Post oak is the Texas standard for a reason. When in doubt, oak it out.
5. Blend woods for complexity: 70% base (oak/hickory) + 30% fruit (cherry/apple) = the Major's favorite combo.
6. If your smoke is white and billowing, your fire is dirty. Wait for thin blue smoke.
7. Mesquite is for grilling, not smoking. Fight me.