Barbecue Chuck Roast

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Barbecue brisket is big in Texas, which you probably already knew, but you probably didn't know that there is a barbecued cut of beef that is almost as popular called the shoulder clod. Up north, you know of the shoulder clod as the chuck, as in chuck roast. In Texas they smoke the whole shoulder which is, as you can imagine, a large piece of meat, often over 20 lbs. At home, that's too much meat to handle, but you can achieve similarly fantastic results from a smaller chuck roast.

The thing is, most of us don't have all day to hang around a smoker, so I've put together a BBQ hack that cuts down on the time you need to hang around the smoker. The smoking on the grill is used to provide tremendous flavor, and some of the cooking, but the cooking is finished in the oven.

On Mothers' Day I did the smoking portion for a couple of hours on the grill, then wrapped it with foil, put the roast in the oven on low heat, and headed out to with the family for the rest of the afternoon. When we came back home, the aroma was intoxicatingly good. The roast looked looked amazing, and pulled apart easily with a fork. We anxiously grabbed bits with our fingers to sample it, and before I could serve it up, we had polished off half of the roast. I snapped a quick photo before it disappeared.

Here's the recipe that I used. Feel free to remove or substitute ingredients in the rub, as the only necessary ingredients are the salt and pepper:

2 parts kosher salt (usually 1-2 tablespoons depending on the size of your roast)
2 parts black pepper
1 part garlic powder
1 part Chile Powder
1 part oregano

2 cups of wood chips—hickory works well, but others work, too.

Heavy duty aluminum foil

1 chuck or chuck/arm roast 3-5 lbs (I used a chuck/arm roast)

Set the roast on a large sheet of plastic wrap or on a large platter. Place the rub on the roast, covering it completely. Ideally, this should be allowed to sit, in the refrigerator, for the 18-24 hours, but again, the main flavor is coming from the smoke, so if you don't have that much time, don't worry, it will still come out good.

Before grilling, soak wood chips in water for 15 minutes, and drain. Wrap soaked wood chips in heavy-duty aluminum foil to make a roughly 8 by 4 inch packet, and cut 2 two inch slits in the packet.

Charcoal grill: Fill a large chimney starter with 6 quarts of briquets or natural charcoal, and light. When top coals are partially covered with ash, pour evenly over half of the grill. Place wood chip pack on top of the coals. Put cooking grate in place, cover grill, and open vent completely. When the grill is hot, and chips are smoking (5 minutes approximately), it is ready.

Gas grill: Remove cooking grate and place wood chip pack directly on primary burner. Put grate back into place, turn all burners to high, cover, and heat grill until hot and chips are smoking (10-15 minutes). Leave primary burner on high and turn off other burners. Adjust the primary burner to maintain temperature about 350 degrees.

Clean the grate with a wire brush. Oil the grate using a paper towel dipped in cooking oil, and holding the paper towel with tongs, rub the it on the grate. Place roast on the cooler side of the grill. If the burner is close and you are concerned about charring the meat, you can create a shield by placing a piece of aluminum foil under the edge of the roast near the flame, to hold it in place, and fold it over the roast slightly, just enough to shield it from direct heat. Cook on the grill for 1 ½ hours.

Pre-heat oven to 250 degrees. Transfer the roast to a roasting pan, cover with foil and place the roast in the oven for 2-3 hours. It should pull apart easily when done. Let the it rest for 20 minutes, covered, if you can stand it. Use the juices in the roasting pan as a sauce or mix it in with your favorite BBQ sauce, as a flavor booster.