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Area man couldn't get the kind of brisket he was used to, so he's doing it himself

By Karen L. Miller
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Sometimes when you can't get what you want, you just have to make it yourself.

You don't have to tell that to Koby A. Sandusky who couldn't find the rubbed, slow-cooked, smoked meats in Berks County that he knew back on the ranch in his hometown of Hondo, Texas.

What he found in Berks is barbecue made with hamburger meat in a sloppy Joe-like sauce.

He said he respects that, but he had a different idea.



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Koby A. Sandusky, owner of Smokin Kobys Hilltop Bar-B-Que, Muhlenberg Township, at the smoker

After the Exeter Township resident started making pork, chicken, ribs and his signature brisket Texas style, friends and family said something like, "Whoa, you should start a business."

And he did, opening his own business in May around Cinco de Mayo. He makes his own sauces, rubs and sausage at Smokin' Koby's Hilltop Bar-B-Que, 4875 N. Fifth St. Highway, Muhlenberg Township.

"My barbecue business was not a planned thing," said Sandusky, 53, who owns an auto body repair shop, Sandusky Enterprises, Muhlenberg Township. "I missed being able to have the barbecue that I grew up with. Friends were like, 'Oh my God, you should do this for us.' "

That popularity extended to his church, Pennsylvania Bible Fellowship, which meets in members' homes, and then to other larger fellowship meetings in southeastern Pennsylvania.

That led to Sandusky making barbecue for weddings and large parties.

"It's an awful lot like the Texas style, but not quite," admitted Sandusky of his Texas barbecue.

Where it differs is in the wood.

Sandusky said he uses hickory or whatever wood he can get because he cannot afford to ship the mesquite wood that he would need to smoke Texas barbecue the way he knows it.



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Sandusky in the restaurant.

He uses about a cord of wood every two weeks at the tiny restaurant which seats about 25 at picnic tables inside and more at picnic tables outside.

"I use my recipes for the sauces, the rubs, and I use all of the ingredients to make my own sausage following the recipe of a famous restaurant down in San Angelo, Texas," he said.

Sandusky is a long way from home in Hondo, west of San Antonio, where his father owned six ranches and a veterinary practice.

"I grew up in ranching," he said. "We raised beef cattle; we had horses; we rodeoed."

But after serving in the Air Force, Sandusky ended up in the Northeast 29 years ago. He, his wife, Andrea L., a native of Lubbock, Texas, and their family moved to Exeter Township in 1993 after picking out the Reading area on a map.

They have five children: Daniel A., College Station, Texas; Josiah A., a law student at Texas Tech University; Kami L., Muhlenberg Township; Elijah J., a Temple University student; and Micah Ann, a freshman at Exeter High School.

Kami quit her job as a kitchen manager in Boston to help her dad run Smokin' Koby's.

As for Sandusky, he misses Texas, but when his father died in 2004, the family sold all of the ranches, except for one which they donated to Texas A&M University as an endowment to fund veterinary scholarships in his father's name.

As for Smokin' Koby's, Sandusky said: "If we can get it off the ground, and it's making money, we might do another small one, a satellite, in West Reading or near the Berkshire Mall."

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