



Memphis In May International Festival

World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest

2026 Media Kit



Message from Memphis In May President and CEO, Mack Weaver



“The Memphis in May International Festival was established in 1977 to authentically celebrate the best of Memphis, and our World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest has an unparalleled global reputation for over four and a half decades of being the most prestigious barbecue cooking contest around” said Mack Weaver, the non-profit’s President & CEO. “Join us this year as more than just a barbecue cooking contest will be on the menu. Memphis In May will offer food, fun, fellowship and a unique and diverse set of experiences during the city’s biggest backyard barbecue! We are more than just a barbecue cooking competition, so everyone is welcome to the party!”



Memphis In May Overview

Since 1977, Memphis In May (MIM) has provided the city of Memphis a wide variety of educational programs, cultural event offerings and activities that have contributed to the growth and success of the entire city of Memphis. 49 years later, our mission of promoting and celebrating Memphis culture, fostering economic growth, and enhancing international awareness through education continues to be our priority. How has Memphis in May worked to achieve our mission?

- **By celebrating Memphis culture:** Memphis In May host Memphis's largest and most prestigious events like the World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest (WCBCC), and the Great American River Run (GARR).
- **By promoting economic growth:** Memphis In May attracts people from around the world to attend our events and celebrate Memphis culture, which boosts the local economy.
- **By increasing international awareness:** Memphis In May honors a different country each year through a series of programs and activities helping to forge key international relationships.





2026 International Salute



Memphis in May Announces Ireland as the 2026 Honored Country and unveils the themed 2026 World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest poster.



“BRINGING THE **CULTURE**, **CREATIVITY**, AND **SPIRIT** OF THE EMERALD ISLE TO MEMPHIS NEXT MAY.”

“Every year, Memphis in May brings the world to the Bluff City. And every year, we celebrate a place whose spirit matches our own. A land shaped by resilience, by stories, by songs that echo across generations. Ireland’s dynamic culture, history, and innovation make it a perfect partner for 2026.”

Memphis in May President & CEO Mack Weaver

Press Release - <https://memphisinmay.org/salute/>

2026 World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest (WCBCC)

“TASTE THE CUE”



Get Tickets to “TASTE THE CUE” and Experience the WCBCC



Purchase tickets HERE: <https://memphisinmay.org/experience/>

Tickets	Ticket Price
Single Day Tickets	\$19.00
4-Day Admission	\$59.00
(Combo) Kingsford Tour of Champions Experience + Admission	\$44.00
(Combo) Open Fire Experience + Admission	\$44.00
(Combo) BBQ Alley Experience + Admission (Thurs. Fri. Sat.)	\$39.00
Opening Night – (Friends & Family Night) – Wednesday May 13, 2026 (Discounted Tickets)	
Wednesday Admission ONLY	\$12.00
(Combo) BBQ Alley Experience + Admission (Wed.)	\$20.00
Experience the WCBCC like a VIP	
VIP Tickets	\$595.00
VIP Parking	\$100.00
Parking	
Multi Day Parking	\$50.00
Single Day Parking	\$18.00



Taste of Ireland at the 2026 WCBCC



“Smokin Soul BBQ Team of Wexford, Ireland, will travel across the pond to bring the SMOKE and Irish FLAVOR to Liberty Park at the WCBCC. Bringing a Taste of Ireland to Memphis.”

Pat Conway & Jim O’Brien - Founders, Smokin’ Soul

Pat Conway and Jim O’Brien are the founders of Smokin’ Soul, a live fire cooking and fabrication business based in County Wexford, Ireland. Established in 2015, the company has built a strong reputation for combining traditional barbecue techniques with high-quality Irish produce, delivered through courses, catering, events, and custom-built live fire equipment. Pat leads the day-to-day operations of the business, overseeing all divisions while driving consultancy, education, and the company’s research and development. Working closely with chefs, restaurants, and clients, he focuses on creating practical, commercially viable live fire solutions, as well as developing menus, systems, and training that translate effectively from concept to service.

Jim leads the live fire and fabrication side of the business, designing and building the equipment that underpins everything Smokin’ Soul does. From workshop to service, he continuously refines how each unit performs in real cooking environments, combining engineering with hands-on fire cookery. He is widely regarded as one of Ireland’s leading live fire experts and pitmasters, with a growing reputation across Europe. Together, they are known for their straightforward, hands-on approach and their ability to make live fire cooking both accessible and scalable, whether for home cooks, professional kitchens, or large-scale events.

In 2026, they represent Ireland at Memphis in May, taking part in the Open Fire Experience, where they will showcase Irish produce and live fire cooking on an international stage.

John Whelan Bio

John Whelan is a London-Irish chef based in Graiguenamanagh, on the border of Counties Carlow and Kilkenny. He is the chef-patron of The Devil’s Menu Boutique Cookery School, known for immersive, fire-driven dining rooted in bold flavour and craft. Classically trained, John developed his style in London during the 1990s food boom before returning to Ireland to cook with some of the finest produce in the world. He often says he’s “more Pirelli than Michelin” — driven by passion, pleasure, and a sense of occasion.

At The Devil’s Menu, there are no tiers. Whether royalty, celebrities, dignitaries or locals, everyone is treated the same. You sit down and you’re fed joy and flavour, the Devil’s Menu way.

In 2025, he was voted Best Restaurant in Ireland (Square Awards), and in 2026 named Food Hero of County Carlow.



Website: <https://smokinsoul.ie/>



“TASTE THE CUE” and Experience the WCBCC

“BECAUSE EATING BARBECUE IS WHY YOU'RE HERE!” - MACK WEAVER, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF MEMPHIS IN MAY



GET AN UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL LOOK AT VIPIT AND “COMBO TICKET” OPTIONS THAT GRANT ATTENDEES ADMISSION AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO “TASTE THE CUE!”



**“Taste the CUE”
like a VIP with
the 4-day VIPit
Experience.**



**4-Day Wristband
\$595.00**

VIPit 4-Day Itinerary at the WCBCC

Wednesday, May 13

5:00 pm	Meet in VIPit Hospitality
5:30 pm	Lighting of the Grill Ceremony on Cattlemen’s Stage
6:00 pm	Welcome by Frank and Mary Horner, Hosts Introduce Pitmaster
6:00 pm	Food offering
6:30 pm	Sauce Wrestling

Thursday, May 14

Noon	Meet in VIPit Hospitality Welcome by Hosts Frank and Mary Horner Distribute goody bags
12:45 pm	Depart to meet with Teams Round 1 – 4 different groups rotating Bubba Grills (H-313) Group 1 Willingham’s (S-217) Group 2 Crosstown Neighborhood BBQ (S-205) Group 3 Lillie’s Q (S-225) Group 4
1:00 pm	Meet Team and Eat Barbecue
1:45 pm	Depart to meet with Teams Round 2 Willingham’s (S-217) Group 1 Crosstown Neighborhood BBQ (S-205) Group 2 Lillie’s Q (S-225) Group 3 Bubba Grills (H-313) Group 4
2:00 pm	Meet Team and Eat Barbecue
2:45 pm	Depart to VIPit Hospitality
4:00 pm	Watch Open Fire World Championship Finals
4:00 pm	Flava Faceoff on Cattlemen’s Main Stage
5:00 pm	Flava Faceoff on Cattlemen's Main Stage
5:30 pm	Meet and Greet with Heath Riles, Heath Riles BBQ Meet and Greet with Chris Lilly, Big Bob Gibson Bar-B-Q
6:00 pm	Ms. Piggy Idol on Cattlemen’s Main Stage
6:30 pm	Food Offering
7:00 pm	Awards Ceremony on Cattlemen’s Stage
8:30 pm	Live Entertainment on Cattlemen’s Stage






Friday, May 15

Noon	Meet in VIPit Hospitality Welcome by Hosts Frank and Mary Horner Distribute goody bags
12:45 pm	Depart to meet with Teams Round 1 – 4 different groups rotating Blues Hog (H-315) Group 1 Russell’s Dam Good BBQ (R-045) Group 2 SmokeMasters (H-338) Group 3 Darkside of the Gator MAC (H-302) Group 4
1:00 pm	Meet Team and Eat Barbecue
1:45 pm	Depart to meet with Teams Round 2 Russell’s Dam Good BBQ (R-045) Group 1 SmokeMasters (H-338) Group 2 Darkside of the Gator MAC (H-302) Group 3 Blues Hog (H-315) Group 4
2:00 pm	Meet Team and Eat Barbecue
2:45 pm	Depart to VIPit Hospitality
4:00 pm	Flava Faceoff on Cattlemen’s Main Stage
4:00 pm	Meet and Greet with Myron Mixon, Jack’s Old South
4:30 pm	Meet and Greet with Brad Orrison and Brooke Lewis, The Shed
5:00 pm	Flava Faceoff on Cattlemen's Main Stage
6:00 pm	Rib Rumble on Cattlemen's Main Stage
6:30 pm	Food Offering
7:00 pm	Awards Ceremony on Cattlemen’s Stage
8:30 pm	Live Entertainment on Cattlemen’s Stage

Saturday, May 16

10:30 am	Meet in VIPit Hospitality
11:00 am	Steak and Eggs/Bloody Mary and Mimosa
12:30 pm	BBQ Judging Class by Certified Judge Ron Childers
1:30 pm	Depart for Blind Judging in Judges HQ
2:00 pm	Depart for VIPit Hospitality - Eat Blind Judging Samples
3:00 pm	Meet and Greet with Rasheed Philips, Philips Barbecue Co.
4:00 pm	Flava Faceoff on Cattlemen’s Main Stage
5:00 pm	Flava Faceoff on Cattlemen's Main Stage
5:00 pm	Food Offering
6:00 pm	Rib Rumble on Cattlemen’s Stage
7:00 pm	Awards Ceremony on Cattlemen’s Stage
8:30 pm	Live Entertainment on Cattlemen’s Stage

“Taste the Cue” by purchasing a COMBO ticket!

Combo Ticket	Experience Description	Promos	Ticket Info & Hours
<p>Open Fire</p> 	<p>NEW in 2026! Attendees will have the exciting opportunity to “taste the ‘cue” and take in the sizzling spectacle of the Open Fire World Championship!</p> <p>Multiple blazing open fire BBQ teams from around the World will heat up to prepare beef, pork, chicken, lamb, alligator, octopus, and more! This experience celebrates the ancient art and modern innovation of open-flame cooking. Internationally acclaimed Argentine-born chef and live-fire specialist Al Frugoni will headline this groundbreaking event.</p> <p>General Admission + Open Fire COMBO tickets can be purchased in advance or at the Open Fire Experience.</p>	<p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVMV6dDWhNw</p> <p>All Day \$1.50 Budweiser Beer Special in Open Fire Experience.</p> 	<p>Ticket Prices \$44 Open Fire Combo – (Thurs, Fri, or Sat)</p> <p>Hours Thursday: 5-7pm Friday: Noon-7pm Saturday: Noon-7pm</p> <p>Purchase Tickets Here: https://memphisinmay.org/experience/</p>
<p>BBQ Alley</p>  <p>DJ MadEFX</p>	<p>Get ready for a tasting experience like no other! Barbecue Alley is the ultimate backyard style barbecue PARTY. It’s A Vibe!</p> <p>Barbecue Alley brings together four to six renowned barbecue restaurants/pitmasters serving up everything fans love—pork ribs, pulled pork, beef brisket, poultry, and classic sides while enjoying the tunes of DJ MadEFX. It’s a true barbecue party!</p> <p>General Admission + Barbecue Alley COMBO tickets can be purchased in advance or at BBQ Alley</p>	<p>https://youtube.com/shorts/t43ch7lydU</p> <p>All Day \$1.50 Budweiser Beer Special in BBQ Alley Experience.</p> 	<p>Ticket Prices \$20 BBQ Alley Combo – (Wed Night Only) \$39 BBQ Alley Combo – (Thurs, Fri, or Sat)</p> <p>Hours Wednesday: 5-7pm Thursday: Noon-7pm Friday: Noon-7pm Saturday: Noon-7pm</p> <p>Purchase Tickets Here: https://memphisinmay.org/experience/</p>
<p>Kingsford Tour of Champions</p>	<p>Step inside the smoke and get a taste of true competition barbecue!</p> <p>The Kingsford Tour of Champions gives fans an exclusive chance to sample mouthwatering entries from top teams at the World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest. Guests not only savor award-worthy bites but also help crown a People’s Choice Champion by casting their vote. It’s your chance to experience championship-level BBQ like the judges do—up close, delicious, and unforgettable.</p> <p>Advance General Admission + Kingsford Tour of Champions COMBO ticket purchase required.</p>	<p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLF3mbYuBsE</p> 	<p>Ticket Prices \$44 Tour of Champion Combo – (Thurs or Fri)</p> <p>Hours Thursday: 2pm, 3pm, 4pm Friday: 2pm, 3pm, 4pm</p> <p>Purchase Tickets Here: https://memphisinmay.org/experience/</p>

2026 World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest (WCBCC)

“More than a Barbecue Cooking Contest! Experience Memphis Culture, and Entertainment!”





Cattlemen's Main Stage Entertainment

Wednesday May 13, 2026

- 5:00 p.m. – Liberty Park Gates Open
- 5:15 p.m. – Parade of Champions down Early Maxwell Blvd.
- 5:30 p.m. – Lighting of the Grill
- 6:30 p.m. – Sauce Wrestling (near the stage)

Thursday May 14, 2026

- 12:00 p.m. – DJ Tree
- 4:00 p.m. – Flava Faceoff presented by Sam's Club
- 5:00 p.m. – Flava Faceoff presented by Sam's Club
- 5:30 p.m. – House Music
- 6:00 p.m. – Ms. Piggee Idol
- 7:00 p.m. – Awards Ceremony
- 8:30 p.m. – Cupid kicks off the largest backyard style line dancing party of summer.

Friday May 15, 2026

- 12:00 p.m. – DJ Sketchz
- 4:00 p.m. – Flava Faceoff presented by Sam's Club
- 5:00 p.m. – Flava Faceoff presented by Sam's Club
- 6:00 p.m. – Rib Rumble presented by Dude Wipes
- 6:30 p.m. – House Music
- 7:00 p.m. – Awards Ceremony
- 8:30 p.m. – Blues, Brews, and Barbecue with Grammy Award Winning artist Cedric Burnside

Saturday May 16, 2026 – National Barbecue Day

- 12:00 p.m. – DJ Tree
- 4:00 p.m. – Flava Faceoff presented by Sam's Club
- 5:00 p.m. – Flava Faceoff presented by Sam's Club
- 6:00 p.m. – Rib Rumble presented by Dude Wipes
- 6:30 p.m. – DJ MIC TEE
- 7:00 p.m. – Awards Ceremony
- 8:30 p.m. – DJ MIC TEE

Cupid
"The Line Dance King"



DJ TREE



DJ Sketchz



Cedric Burnside
Grammy award-winning
Blues artist

DJ Mike Tee
iHeart Radio – K97 FM





Other Experiences/Entertainment during WCBCC

(Free experiences w/VIP, COMBO, or general admission ticket purchase)

Experience	Description	Link to promo video
Home Depot Outdoor Kitchen	Stop by the Home Depot Outdoor Kitchen for fun and engaging hourly food demonstrations and food samples by celebrity grill masters. Be entertained, while learning about the latest trends in outdoor cooking!	https://youtube.com/shorts/pIW1yifdmEk
Sauce Wrestling	WCBCC teams compete head-to-head in a boxing ring for 3 minutes of sauce sloshing chaos. Prove you have what it takes to stand in the winner's circle and take home the WCBCC Championship Belt.	https://youtube.com/shorts/4c-mJpEV-k0?feature=share https://youtube.com/shorts/cT0s3FhO3IA
Ms. Piggee Idol	WCBCC Teams have the chance to showcase their talents off the grill and compete in a hilariously insane and outrageous "American Idol" style talent show to see who will be crowned champion of Miss Piggy Idol.	https://youtube.com/shorts/9Wq11c2w7NE https://youtube.com/shorts/EkM0ih-VLXQ
Cooker's Caravan with Heath Riles	30-minute guided tour of the WCBCC at Liberty Park with celebrity pitmaster and industry leading expert in both competition BBQ and grilling, Heath Riles. Attendees will get a behind the scenes look at how a team prepares for the World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest.	
Flava Faceoff presented by Sam's Club	Contestants will compete head-to-head on the Cattlemen's Main Stage to determine who prepares the best bite/sip combo. The winner receives golden tickets to the 2026 World Championships.	
Rib Rumble presented by Dude Wipes	Contestants will compete head-to-head on the Cattlemen's Main Stage during a 5-minute rib-eating contest where participants eat as many ribs as possible for a chance to win a prize package from Dude Wipes, bragging rights, and a "one of a kind" trophy.	
NEW! TVA Family FUN Zone	The Family Fun Zone at the World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest, proudly sponsored by Tennessee Valley Authority, is the perfect place to take a break and make lasting memories with the whole family. Featuring exciting inflatable games, a relaxing family picnic area, and plenty of interactive activities, it's a fun-filled space designed for all ages. Whether you're looking to let the kids burn off some energy or simply unwind together, the Family Fun Zone offers a welcoming spot to play, laugh, and enjoy the festival experience.	

APPLY NOW: 2026 Memphis In May Parade of Champions



OPENING CEREMONY PARADE

Salute to Ireland

WED. MAY 13, 2026
5:15 P.M.

Liberty Park - Memphis

Kick off the excitement of the WCBCC at "The Parade of Champions" and Opening Ceremony *featuring* the Budweiser Clydesdales!

This high-energy kickoff transforms Liberty Park into a celebration of culture, competition, and world-class barbecue. This parade is where the party begins as Memphis In May celebrates "Memphis culture" and salutes IRELAND.

This kicks off the largest backyard style barbecue party of summer!

Apply Now: <https://memphisinmay.org/parade/>

Participants will be notified by April 24, 2026 of their approval to participate.

Come See The Clydesdales

Budweiser





SHOP at the 2026 WCBCC



<p>BBQ Marketplace</p>	<p>Barbecue Marketplace is where consumers can purchase rubs and sauces, on-site, produced by WCBCC teams and pitmasters. Take a piece of the WCBCC home with you and enjoy the flavors year-round.</p>	<p>https://youtu.be/ayymZNHX9Sc</p>
<p>Merch Tent</p>	<p>Visit the Merch Tent located near the Cattlemen's Main Stage area to pick up all of this year's WCBCC apparel and gear!</p>	<p>Visit Memphisinmay.org beginning May 1, 2026 to shop online. Online orders are accepted during the month of May only!</p>





National Barbecue Day Scavenger Hunt w/ Rasheed Philips of Philips Barbecue Co.

“Celebrate National Barbecue Day at the World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest”

Saturday, May 16, 2026 – Liberty Park

How to Participate:

1. **Follow us** on our official social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram

- @MemphisInMay
- @WorldChampionshipBarbecue



2. **Turn on notifications** so you don't miss a clue drop.

3. **Be ready!** A PRIZE CLUE will drop at the top of the hour, from 11 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on our social media channels.

4. Each “**PRIZE CLUE**” clue will lead you to a location, activation, or feature inside of the WCBCC at Liberty Park.

5. **Solve the clue**, find the location, find the prize!

6. **Post** your photo to social media with the prize, and you **MUST** “TAG” us.

- @MemphisInMay
- @WorldChampionshipBarbecue.

7. Take your prize home and **ENJOY!**

Have fun, explore the festival, and celebrate the spirit of National Barbecue Day with us. Let the hunt begin!



2026 World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest (WCBCC)

“Marketing and Promotional Assets”



Overview Of the WCBCC:

Since 1978, the Memphis In May World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest has been a serious celebration of Memphis' claim as the Barbecue Capital of the World. Ranked the "Most Prestigious" BBQ Competition by USA Today, this contest will bring together over 200+ BBQ teams and pitmasters from over 27 states and 7 foreign countries to compete for their share of a prize purse valued at over \$200,000, and bragging rights as the World Champion of BBQ at the "Super Bowl of Swine"!

Dates: Wednesday, May 13, 2026 – Saturday, May 16, 2026

Where: Liberty Park – Memphis, Tennessee

Purchase Tickets Here: <https://memphisinmay.org/experience/>

FUN FACTS:

In 2022 and 2023, the World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest was featured on Food Network's BBQ USA. In this show, celebrity chef Michael Symon tours the biggest BBQ competitions across the country, and it wouldn't have been a complete trip without coming to Memphis!



NETFLIX

The World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest receives more non-sporting national media coverage than any single event in the Memphis area. Full-length TV shows regularly run throughout the year, covering the event on networks such as A&E, The Discovery Channel, Netflix, Yahoo! On The Road, The Travel Channel, and The Food Network.

Promote the WCBCC with our assets



MIM 2026 Media Kit

Password:
MIM2026

Note: Check the link above often for new content related to WCBCC

Logo Usage

Use of Memphis In May International Festival branding is only approved for editorial use unless permission is first acquired from the event promoters or staff. If you would like to make a request to use branding beyond editorial use, please contact marketing@memphisinmay.org.



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How to engage with Memphis In May before, during and after the Festival

Follow Us, Tag Us, Subscribe, Share Our Social Media Content:



@memphisinmay



Instagram

@memphisinmay



@meminmay



@memphisinmay

Official Social Media Hashtags:

#MemphisInMay #TeamMemphisInMay

Promote to Your Audience:

Access Marketing Assets [HERE](#). Password: MIM2026

Website: <https://memphisinmay.org/>

Purchase Tickets to all Memphis In May events on our website.



How to engage with the WCBCC before, during and after the contest

Follow Us, Tag Us, Subscribe, Share Our Social Media Content:



@worldchampionshipbarbecue



Instagram

@worldchampionshipbarbecue

Official Social Media Hashtags:

#MemphisInMay #TeamMemphisInMay #WCBCC #TasteTheCue

Promote to Your Audience:

Access Marketing Assets [HERE](#). Password: MIM2026

Purchase Tickets: <https://memphisinmay.org/experience/>



Achieving the MIM Mission....

WCBCCC partners with a large variety of local and national brands to help achieve our mission. From local restaurants to the most notable institutions for arts, culture, education and more, these partners help to make MIM a reality.

Presenting Sponsors for 2026 MIM Events:



Other Sponsors/Partners:



Media Credentials for the 2026

[Link to application: Media Credential Requests 2026 - Intellistack](#)



Visit our website at www.memphisinmay.org