

The Temperature Sheet

Every number checked against USDA and the people who cook for a living.



THE FLOORS — USDA SAFETY MINIMUMS. NOT OPINIONS.

ALL POULTRY

165°F

whole, parts & ground

GROUND BEEF & PORK

160°F

burgers, sausage

WHOLE CUTS

145°F

beef · pork · lamb, + 3-min rest

FISH

145°F

or flakes with a fork

THE TARGETS — WHERE GOOD BARBECUE ACTUALLY LIVES

CUT	PIT TEMP	PULL AT (INTERNAL)	THE TELL
Brisket	225–250°F	195–205°F · ~203	Probe slides in like warm butter. Rest an hour minimum, wrapped.
Pork butt (pulled)	225–250°F	195–205°F	The bone wiggles free without a fight.
Pork ribs	225–250°F	180–203°F by style	The bend test is the judge — lift with tongs, the rack cracks, doesn't fall.
Chicken — white meat	275–350°F	165°F · floor = target	Temp the thickest part of the breast. "Clear juices" is folklore; the probe is proof.
Chicken & turkey — dark	275–350°F	175–185°F	Dark meat wants to go past the minimum — that's where it turns silky.
Whole turkey	275–350°F	165°F breast · 175°F thigh	Two probes or move one. November gets its own issue.
Pork loin & chops	225–250°F	145°F + 3-min rest	A little pink at 145°F is safe pork, not undercooked pork.
Tri-tip	225–250°F	130–135°F med-rare*	Pull, sear hot, slice across the grain — it changes direction mid-cut.
Fresh sausage	225–250°F	160°F	Don't trust the casing color; trust the number.

* USDA's whole-muscle minimum is 145°F. Medium-rare at 130–135°F is standard practice at steakhouses and backyards alike — we state both; your table, your call. Pit temp = the smoker. Pull temp = inside the meat. Big cuts keep climbing ~5°F after they come off — the thermometer isn't done when the fire is.

THE STEP EVERYONE SKIPS

Rest brisket and pork butt at least an hour, wrapped, before slicing. Cutting early pours the last ten hours onto the board. Poultry and chops need only 5–10 minutes — but they need them. Tape this sheet inside the cabinet door nearest the pit.