

# Cooking with **paaula** *deena*™

**97**  
RECIPES,  
TIPS, AND  
IDEAS

**Sweet Treats**  
for Valentine's Day

**Easy, Thrifty**  
Family Menus

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2009

\$4.99 US



Deen Family  
Favorite Soup  
page 58



# a tasty *Legacy*

BY MAY KNOWLTON

Set in Williamsburg, Virginia, a town famous for living life like the old days, Pierce's Pitt Bar-B-Que is a rustic treasure rooted deep in family tradition and slow cooking.

**Y**ou can smell the hickory and oak wood burning from miles away, drawing in crowds from all around. They come by word of mouth, and they come because Pierce's Pitt is oozing with the comfort of home cooking in a way not seen very often anymore.

When Jay Pierce's family laid the 12- by 14-foot foundation in 1971, they had no idea the place would last a lifetime and grow better with age. After years of working in restaurants for other people, Jay's father decided it was time to open his own—even if that meant a small hole-in-the-wall, which was all they could afford. "My father dug the foundation. My mother mixed the cement. And together, the three of



Top, Paula and Michael with Jay Pierce and Pitt Master Charles Wallace. Above, Paula loved working the cash register and calling out orders over the microphone.

us laid the foundation," Jay says. "My dad borrowed \$40 for the cash register opening day, and we made \$80. That's when we knew we'd be all right."

The Pierces had no employees, and the three of them worked hard morning, noon, and night to keep business booming at their little barbecue joint. They cooked one box of Boston butts a week and felt blessed beyond their dreams. They made everything by hand with fresh ingredients, and word of Mrs. Pierce's secret recipe sauce spread quickly.

Today, the restaurant prepares 24,000 to 30,000 pounds of Boston butts each week and serves more than 50 gallons of Brunswick stew a day (Labor Day through Memorial Day), with the same tender loving care and using the same slow-cooking method.

The pit is still fired up (with a real fire) at around 3 o'clock each morning, and Boston butts cook slowly for 8½ hours over hickory and oak wood. "We don't use gas or electricity," Jay says. "Everything is original. We do it just like we did when the restaurant opened 38 years ago."

These days, the restaurant employs 41 people, many of whom have worked with Jay for over 10 years. One just retired after 31 years with the family. Jay credits them for so many successful years. "They're the secret to our longevity. They take ownership and pride in the business—they are the business," he says. "And they appreciate the customers. Customers aren't just a number to us. I always appreciate when people say the food is good, but I love hearing my customer service was good."

Everyone feels at home here, whether a business man in a suit or a construction worker in a hard hat. "We have everything from politicians and inaugural balls to mothers and kids, and we appreciate them all," Jay says. "I want everyone to feel like they got a good deal and a good meal."

For more information visit [pierces.com](http://pierces.com) or call 757-565-2955. 🍷