

# How to Build Your Own BBQ Barrel

by [johnnyblegs](#) on August 22, 2009

## Table of Contents

How to Build Your Own BBQ Barrel .....	1
Intro: How to Build Your Own BBQ Barrel .....	2
Step 1: The Prep .....	3
Step 2: Constructing the stand .....	3
Step 3: Attaching the lid & grill grates .....	5
Step 4: Burn off the inside .....	6
Step 5: Finishing Touches .....	7
Related Instructables .....	8
Comments .....	8



Author: johnnyblegs Sugar & Salt Kitchen

I respect food and where it comes from. I love slow cooking a piece of meat for 6 hours into food heaven. I love brewing up a batch of beer and drinking it six weeks later. Patience is the key to good food.

## Intro: How to Build Your Own BBQ Barrel

Thank you for making this Instructable one of the **Best of 2009!** #7 in the Food Category...

Lucky for me on my last day of work at The Bakery, the 55-gallon honey barrel I'd been waiting for was finally empty. Getting laid off wasn't going to stand in the way of my dream to make my own barbecue.



## Step 1: The Prep

First, I had to empty out all the excess honey and clean the inside (not exciting enough for a photo). Then I borrowed a grinder from a friend and cut the opening.

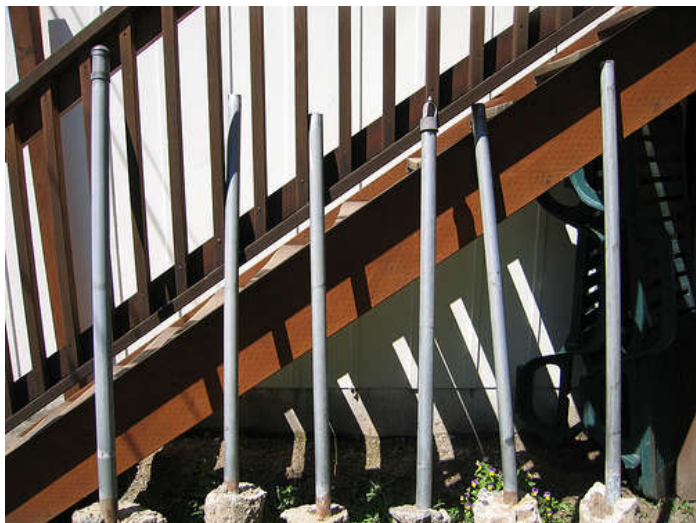
It's way less of a hassle to have a food grade barrel. Imagine bbq'n in a barrel that use to have oil or fuel. Yuck!



## Step 2: Constructing the stand

I had to make a base and the only things around were some old chain-link fence posts that I'd never taken to the dump and some scrap plywood I'd demoed out of a creepy room in my basement.

I cut 6 posts at different lengths - 2 the length of the barrel & 4 for the legs. I wanted to bbq to be portable so the best way for that was for the barrel to sit on top of the stand. Two posts held the barrel while the 4 legs were attached by drilling holes for the carriage bolts on either end. To attach keep the legs sturdy I secured them with pieces of plywood. Put the barrel on top and it stood tall and proud.





### Step 3: Attaching the lid & grill grates

I added brackets to hold the grills and to keep the lid from falling inside, as well as a lower rack to hold the coals and allow for air circulation.

Be sure to purchase stainless steel brackets and hinges. If you buy galvanized you should take a torch to it to burn off the fumes that will be there the first couple times you grill.





#### **Step 4: Burn off the inside**

I lit a fire in it to burn off any paints or coatings or who knows what. There may or may not have been a burn ban going on this day so I made burgers on my gas grill to disguise the smoke.



### Step 5: Finishing Touches

Last steps in the construction were to add a handle (plain wooden dowel from the hardware store), air vents, and a temperature gauge. I also decided to spray the barrel with a high heat resistant paint. Besides customizing the color a little, the paint helps prevent rust on the barrel. The only thing left was to test it in a real-life BBQ situation.





### Related Instructables



**How to build a barrel smoker**  
by Ruettiger



**Making of a Drum Smoker**  
by gordo58



**DIY Smoker** by  
sum4all



**Memphis Styled BBQ Brisket** by  
LarouexBBKing



**Build a Barbecue Smoker for \$9**  
by discontinuity



**Pulled Pork BBQ Smoked Indoors on a Stove Top Smoker** by  
Smoke House Willie

### Comments

50 comments

[Add Comment](#)

[view all 157 comments](#)



**ducktape.mac** says:

oooooooooh. my family cooked a whole pig on one of these for 4th of july. we put apple tree branches and it cooked for like 3 hours. IT WAS GREAT!!!!

Mar 3, 2011. 2:57 PM [REPLY](#)



**evanucf** says:

Have you thought of adding gaskets to seal the space around the door to hold in heat better?

Feb 3, 2011. 8:39 AM [REPLY](#)




**susie** says:

Here's a smoker my friend built and has been using for 25 years. The little shelf on the front is definitely handy!


Dec 21, 2010. 7:23 AM [REPLY](#)




---

 **Eirinn** says: Jun 29, 2010. 7:22 AM [REPLY](#)  
Awesome instructable! I'm wondering, if you get a barrel either food grade or not (oil and so forth) is there a health issue in burning coal inside it? I'm thinking something might evaporate due to the heat and release some toxins - i'm no way expert in this area.


---

 **Ole bally** says: Dec 17, 2010. 4:30 AM [REPLY](#)  
Don't cook food with coal! It gives off sulphur fumes....not good for you and they taste foul!


---

 **kludge000** says: Jun 29, 2010. 9:33 AM [REPLY](#)  
Do you mean charcoal? Grilling with coal is not a good idea because coal can contain heavy metals that can poison the food.


---

 **Eirinn** says: Jun 29, 2010. 11:02 AM [REPLY](#)  
Yes sorry - my concern is with the metal/paint or something giving away toxins when you bbq in such a drum grill.

---

 **kludge000** says: Jun 30, 2010. 9:10 AM [REPLY](#)  
you can clean the inside with water and TSP, and you should burn off or remove all the paint and any lining material before using the drum. Also, I would suggest that you paint the outside with High temperature paint to keep it from rusting.


---

 **krieglers** says: Jun 30, 2010. 3:53 AM [REPLY](#)  
Not a problem the paint burns off. In South Africa, it's very common to use these drums for a BBQ. We basically "Season" the Drum before hand, make a huge fire inside and the everything Burns off, either that or get it sand blasted and sprayed with heat proof paint.


---

 **Lesedi** says: Aug 10, 2010. 4:45 PM [REPLY](#)  
Where can i get one of those barrels in South Africa?


---

 **Ole bally** says: Dec 17, 2010. 4:26 AM [REPLY](#)  
Any old 210 liter metal oil drum will work! Just 'Geza' it proper when you've cut it open! An old gas bottle works even better!


---

 **Angel.nam** says: Aug 15, 2010. 9:35 AM [REPLY](#)  
Lesedi phone cleaning company, the barrels are about R100.00 per barrel.


---


 **teckner** says: Dec 3, 2010. 11:59 PM [REPLY](#)  
Wow. I would've never thought of that, and you have NO IDEA what strange things I think up on a daily basis.  
Do you think I could use this as a forge, powered by coal, or would the coals burn through the bottom of the drum?


---


 **Ole bally** says: Dec 17, 2010. 4:22 AM [REPLY](#)  
If you used an old propane bottle cut down that'd work better than an oil drum. You need a blower and use 'coke' rather than coal!


---


 **Ole bally** says: Dec 17, 2010. 4:20 AM [REPLY](#)  
This is the most common way to make a BBQ here in Zim! We make it a little different than this Instr. ! We use an oil drum ( promise it doesn't taint the food...coz you clean it proper!!) Cut it in half lengthwise. make 2 rectangular angle iron frames that'll fit the halves cut side, weld two hinges so the one whole half drum is a lid and the other a base! Thereafter it looks pretty much like yours! I have made a perforated steel plate fire 'platform' that fits inside and elevates the fire which stops the usage of too much charcoal. The big pour hole along with some other punched into both ends allow for better air circulation. Don't make holes in the bottom as the hot ashes spoil your lawn! A piece of pipe that'll screw into the big bung hole is useful to use a hair dryer to blow air into the bbq to really get the fire going!  
The heat tends to burn through the drum at the bottom and also causes it to rust very quickly if made on the bottom or too close to it! I'd love to post pics but can't as I'm not a 'pro' and can't become one from here (can't move the money!!) The other option is to use an old 48Kg gas (propane) bottle!


 **\$0m3\_On3** says: Dec 6, 2010. 7:55 PM [REPLY](#)  
anyone have any idea where to get these barrels. I've found one once, and it was so rusted i could kick a hole in it.


 **abadfart** says: Dec 10, 2010. 2:41 AM [REPLY](#)  
i get them from my aunt. she gets things for her farm in them

 **bakuteh** says: Nov 15, 2010. 12:23 AM [REPLY](#)  
Hi, I wanna say thanks for your instructable. I used your instructions to create a barrel drum as well. Check out my work at <http://hacks2try.blogspot.com/2010/10/barrel-drum-bbq-pit-charcoal.html>. Again, great job!

 **johnnyblegs** says: Nov 15, 2010. 10:03 AM [REPLY](#)  
Your grill looks pretty awesome! I love your stand. Looks very professional looking. Happy grilling to you.  
Next week is Thanksgiving in the US and my family is going to use my barrel grill to grill up the 30 lbs turkey my uncle raised. Should be delicious! BBQ'd turkeys are the best!

 **rosewood513** says: Nov 4, 2010. 11:01 AM [REPLY](#)  
Great job, I bet it works better than the fancy ones. the food must taste better on a homemade grill. this woujld make a great smoker also.


 **elvisearnhardt** says: Jun 29, 2010. 10:10 AM [REPLY](#)  
I used an empty water heater tank for mine. I have been cooking on it for 15 years. The water heater tank doesn't tend to burn out the bottom as fast as the barrels do. Either one makes a fine grill though.


 **rodtang** says: Sep 26, 2010. 7:35 AM [REPLY](#)  
Our water heater die two days ago, so we're gonna make a grill next summer i think

 **johnnyblegs** says: Sep 26, 2010. 11:33 AM [REPLY](#)  
Oooh, nice! What size is the tank?

 **rodtang** says: Sep 26, 2010. 1:52 PM [REPLY](#)  
It's 200 liters i think  
52.8344105 US gallons (google is your friend)

 **railfan 233** says: Sep 9, 2010. 1:08 PM [REPLY](#)  
I really like this grill. I'm going to have to build one one of these days.

 **johnnyblegs** says: Sep 10, 2010. 9:14 PM [REPLY](#)  
Do it. I always wanted to do this. Never thought I would and I was so happy when I came across this barrel.

 **railfan 233** says: Sep 11, 2010. 4:15 PM [REPLY](#)  
Yep, I'm still lookin out for a food-grade 55-gal barrel to use. (They're kind of scarce where I'm at)  
I'll probably check with several of the grocery stores and restrautns to see what I find.

 **djbarista** says: Sep 9, 2010. 12:48 PM [REPLY](#)  
Where does the Propane tank go?



**MiKOTRON** says:  
LOL!

Sep 11, 2010. 6:08 AM [REPLY](#)



**johnnyblegs** says:

No propane tank on this one but I'm sure you could rig one up on yours. I'm a purist when it comes to bbq and prefer the charcoal/natural mesquite. Better flavor to your meat. Doesn't take in the gas flavor.

Sep 10, 2010. 9:17 PM [REPLY](#)



**\_Logos\_** says:

It's because you taste the meat, not the heat, Weber!

Oct 10, 2010. 5:11 PM [REPLY](#)



**mastermakoko** says:

is it safe after the burning part?

Sep 9, 2010. 2:13 AM [REPLY](#)



**johnnyblegs** says:

As far as I know, yes. The galvanized metal, coatings on the barrel, etc. are fine after burned off. If you have any reservations make sure you purchase a clean food grade barrel and only use stainless steel materials.

Sep 10, 2010. 9:19 PM [REPLY](#)



**SinAmos** says:

I want a food grade barrel.

Sep 7, 2010. 1:46 PM [REPLY](#)



**stefan.kochev** says:

really nice

Jul 3, 2010. 3:27 AM [REPLY](#)



**kingmotorsport** says:

Fill the barrel with water. By displacing any residual vapor with water, you reduce the chance for explosion. Also the water will reduce the heat build up in the tank. You may want to use a pneumatic powered cutoff wheel, a battery powered jig saw with a metal cutting blade (this will option should generate any sparks), or hand powered hack saw (also should not generate sparks). Otherwise make sure you have a working GFI on the outlet and rubber boots and gloves if you use a plug in electric saw.

Jun 29, 2010. 11:05 AM [REPLY](#)



**JorritJ** says:

Be sure to use proper ear protection when using a grinder on a barrel! A friend of mine got permanent hearing damage when he made this BBQ with a grinder. Now he cannot hear certain high frequencies. So beware!

Jul 2, 2010. 2:24 AM [REPLY](#)



**poco424** says:

I used an old fuel oil tank (275 gal) and made a hog cooker out of it. Worked pretty slick and I could cook a 250# hog in it. Used to hire it out for weddings and parties in the summer. I raised my own hogs and made a pretty good chunk of change with it. I had wheels under it and towed it to where the party was. Always had plenty to eat and drink, too.

Jun 29, 2010. 1:15 PM [REPLY](#)



**johnnyblegs** says:

Wow! 275 gal tank?! That's about 5 times bigger than this one. I'd love to be able to cook a whole hog. I may end up adding a rotisserie to this one though. It'd fit about 4 chickens.

Jun 29, 2010. 2:49 PM [REPLY](#)



**Ole bally** says:

Easier to 'spatchcock' the chickens and cook them like a regular 'steak' . the rotisserie takes so long and is so wasteful of heat!! We do whole sheep in ours for family get togethers!

Dec 17, 2010. 4:28 AM [REPLY](#)



**poco424** says:

The one I described had a rotisserie. I built the charcoal racks along the side so that the grease could drop down into the tank and out the hole. I used a 1" stainless rod for the center shaft and ran it through a couple of pillow blocks. I used a one horse electric motor to turn the hog and used a gear reduction unit (the trans axel out of a riding lawn mower) with pulleys to slow it down to about two turns per minute. Wish I had taken a picture of it. Gave it to the neighbor when I left the farm.

Jun 30, 2010. 9:38 PM [REPLY](#)



**poco424** says:

What I did when I made mine was to put vinegar and baking soda in the bottom which made carbon dioxide. Then I cut it with a cutting torch. Worked like a charm.

Jun 29, 2010. 1:12 PM [REPLY](#)



**pedla** says:

In Australia we just use an empty beer keg for the same result. Dont know what they are made of or what lining they may have but no one has died yet as far as I know. 18 gallon if curious.

Jun 29, 2010. 8:12 AM [REPLY](#)



**Sergei-** says:

The beer kegs are made out of 304 food grade stainless nowadays in australia they use to have ones out of aluminium a few years back as well thats aluminum to everyone else around the us area

Jun 30, 2010. 1:09 AM [REPLY](#)



**pedla** says:

Thanks Sergei, must have been the ali ones we used because i know how hard stainless is to cut or drill. Also thanks to Kludge000, i am unsure of kegs in Aus now as they have gone metric and also they no longer have the dangerous spear to tap type kegs. i guess ali because cheaper than s/steel. Years ago my brother in law had a hot rod with a keg as fuel tank it was sweet. A brew a day keeps the blues away. C ya.

Jun 30, 2010. 4:05 AM [REPLY](#)



**kludge000** says:

beer kegs are generally made from stainless steel or aluminum

Jun 29, 2010. 9:13 AM [REPLY](#)

✂

**janettetsmith** says:

Here's some Texas models (we've always had trouble with size perception in Texas, however, they do turn-out some darn fine BBQ!) :

Jun 27, 2010. 7:29 PM [REPLY](#)



**johnnyblegs** says:

Those are pretty baddass

Jun 29, 2010. 7:51 PM [REPLY](#)



**Ghost Wolf** says:

TOTALLY!!!!

Jun 29, 2010. 11:20 PM [REPLY](#)



**ludionis** says:

I had a 55 gallon burn barrel, and when my normal grill junked out on me, I took my dremel tool and made 4 cuts around the perimeter shaped like the number 7. I then took a hammer and screwdriver, drove the point into the barrel to form 4 shelves. I found my 22" grill grates fit perfectly, and the original grill lid too, so I made another level to place my charcoal on. Even cut out a trap door at the bottom for ash removal. Until the wife complained about the eyesore and made me get another real grill, I was pretty proud!

Jun 29, 2010. 9:11 PM [REPLY](#)

[view all 157 comments](#)