

A Little DANCING.



A Whole Lot OF 'QUE.

By Joquita Burka



Welcome to Hemingway, SC. Population 829. For such a small town, this one manages to whip up a big frenzy whenever someone says, "Bar-B-Que." This is not some pour-a-little-ketchup-on-some-meat stuff. The South Carolina Bar-B-Que Shag Festival is serious. So serious that every year the town shuts down and devotes three days to the very important job of cooking pigs. Sure, there are kids' rides, fireworks, crafts and, of course, the dancing. But basically this festival is about making the best bar-b-que. The winner takes home \$2,000, a plaque and a full year's bragging rights. Last year's top two places went to Hemingway natives; the pressure to keep the crown among the locals must be intense.

To fully prepare yourself for attending the festival, you need a little background on South Carolina and bar-b-que. Some claim that bar-b-que was born here, perfected here and practiced in its purest form here. Add to that Hemingway's claim to be "The Bar-B-Que Capital of the World," and you can see what's at stake here. While that title could most certainly be disputed, what is undisputed is the fact that South Carolinians are rabid bar-b-que fans. We differ in our taste in sauces (mustard, tomato, or vinegar and pepper) but are united in our love of this pulled-pork delicacy. True South Carolina bar-b-que tends to be served on two or three paper plates along with white bread, and some of any number of side dishes: cole slaw, hush puppies, tomatoes, rice, collards or beans. Oh, and don't forget the sweet tea—really cold and really sweet.



As for the "shag" part of the festival name, that comes from our official state dance. The shag is said to have originated in the Myrtle Beach area (just 50 miles to the east) in the 1940s when Rhythm & Blues bands played at the beach.

With such an incredible legacy, the Hemingway Festival becomes a sort of "food and dance Olympics." To participate in the cook-off, you must register, specifying wood, charcoal or gas, and pay your fee. Rules say "pork" unless you want to enter the much less prestigious "Anything But" category which does not require pork. To participate in the fun, you just need to show up. The fun starts on Thursday with a kids' night that lets them ride up and down, round and round until they are either too dizzy to stand or finally ready for bed. Friday and Saturday turn up the food and fun with all kinds of Southern favorites in addition to the bar-b-que. There are fireworks, car shows, and, of course, the shag danced to tunes known as "beach music." One of the festival's highlights is the appearance of the Swinging Sows, a good-natured, big-haired, heavily made-up tribute to the true heroes of the day—pigs.

The cook-off winners are announced at noon Saturday. That night is the grand finale with both the amateur and professional shag competitions. There's prize money involved so everyone tries to get in on the fun. Besides, the more you dance, the more bar-b-que you can hold. It's simple.

The Bar-B-Que Shag Festival, set for April 17-19, 2008, in Hemingway manages to offer something truly unique. It's a step back in time to small towns, friendly neighbors and events that bring the whole community together. And nothing unites neighbors like food.

So even though the global distribution center for Tupperware® is located here, don't bother to bring any with you. You probably won't have leftovers. On the other hand, a little bar-b-que from the freezer would be perfect for that day you decide to put on the beach music, dance the shag and relive the fun of that wonderful day in Hemingway.

Find out more in *Places...*

Turn to page 164 in the "green pages" for more on the Bar-B-Que Shag Festival.

