

Trailhound Smokers follow the 'Que

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But after the downturn in the economy that began more than three years ago, Martin has found an escape from the decline thanks to his interest in the art of barbecue — and his family’s Trailhound Smokers BBQ Las Vegas is off and running.

Simply put, Martin has discovered a therapeutic element associated with the outdoor experience which he will highlight during the third annual Smokin’ in Mesquite BBQ Championships Labor Day weekend at the CasaBlanca Resort in Mesquite.

“My wife, Crystal, and I have cooked outdoors for the Boy Scouts for many years,” Martin explained. “We have also watched many barbecue shows on television.

“It’s just one of those things that you get hooked on. The people are incredible. This has definitely become therapy for us, for sure. It’s my escape from my job.”

In a story echoed by virtually everyone in the barbecue business, the competition requires intense dedication from all sides, but the efforts are well worth it.

“Our first competition was in Williams, Ariz.,” Martin explained. “We got up at three in the morning to get there. Once we arrived, we started setting up and went through the meat inspections. A lot of us on the circuit call it an illness.”

However, while the barbecue competition certainly generated its share of challenges, the fact that the Martin truck blew a transmission en route was not only unexpected, but expensive, too.

“We were able to get it over to Flagstaff and get it fixed well enough to get us back to Vegas,” Martin explained.

The visit to the Mesquite BBQ Championships will be the first for the Martins whose team also includes oldest son, Scott and youngest son, Chris along with daughter-in-law Christy; and team mascot, Cassy, a Golden Labrador retriever. The team has a web site: www.trailhoundsmokers.com.

However, several of the team members won't be able to make it this year prompting Martin to say “It's only going to be myself, my wife and our dog.

“It's a big contest with big names. All the big teams come in for it. We set our goals to finish in the top 50 percent and we have been doing very well getting into the top 10 which is both shocking and surprising.”

Trailhound Smokers planned to compete in 12 events in 2011 traveling to contests in Nevada, Arizona, Utah and California. The team built its first smoker out of an old Knaack job site tool box before moving up to a custom built RK250 from East Texas Smoker.

The barbecue craze isn't slowing down as evidenced by how many new events are being added all over the country.

“There are a lot of people who refer to barbecue as the next NASCAR,” Martin said.

Now in its third year, the Smokin' in Mesquite BBQ competition sanctioned by the Kansas City Barbecue Society, offers a bonus to the top finishers from the Best Damn Barbecue held on Memorial Day weekend in Boulder City along with the Mesquite event. In addition, a \$3,000 bonus is provided to the Nevada State Champion who has the best combined scores from both events.

More information regarding this year's event that runs through Sept. 4 may be found by visiting www.mesquitebbqchampionship.com or by calling Christian Adderson at 888-711-4653, ext. 51; or emailing him at cadderson@casablancaresort.com.