

Smoking permitted

If you like the sound of beef short rib, oak-smoked and slow cooked for 10 hours, or smoked chicken, crumbed and fried, then you need to get yourself along to Blues BBQ & Bar in Warkworth. Other specialities from the south of the USA include smoked and slow-cooked brisket which can be found in a customer favourite, the Topsy Texan sandwich. Host Adam Kewenig tells me, "People have said that they didn't know what they were going to get but it's the best sandwich they've ever had."

Adam grew up in Illinois but went to school in Mississippi and started working in a barbecue restaurant there. While Adam brings the authentic USA persona to the restaurant, it is partner and chef, Lisa Bates, who brings the cooking talent.

Lisa trained as a chef in New Zealand and took her skills to the Caribbean to work on superyachts, which is where she met Adam. She then worked for five years as a private chef for a gentleman in Miami. She has also worked as a chef at a hunting and fishing lodge in Taupo and, more recently, Little & Local cafe in Snells Beach. Lisa somehow also found time to finish a business degree before launching into Blues BBQ & Bar.

Blues offers a selection of barbecue dishes and flavours from the south of the USA. Says Adam, "Every region has it's own spin on what barbecue is – the brisket might be more Texan but the pulled pork is more of a South Carolina dish."

Lisa's family have a holiday home in Algies Bay so she had been coming up here on holidays from her childhood. When Adam and Lisa came back to visit Algies, Adam fell in love with the area. "I was surprised when I first came here that there was no genuine barbecue place. All the good places in the States tend to be mom and pop places so we are trying to replicate that."

They are aiming for casual dining, relaxed and family-friendly. "People can come in, order a takeaway and a beer, and by the time they have finished the beer, the food is ready," says Adam.

Adam and Lisa have been delighted by the reaction from diners in their first few weeks and surprised at how busy they have been. They have also been pleasantly surprised by the willingness of diners to try new things like the oak-smoked beef brisket. Adam relates a customer reaction; "Yeah, I just ordered this, and I wasn't sure what brisket was, but it's my new favourite thing."

It's fun, it's delicious and it's great value for money, so make sure ya'all take up smoking real soon.

Facebook and www.bluesbbq.co.nz