



HOLY SMOKERS

From backyard pig roasts to 73,000 meals served —
how a group of men found purpose, fellowship
and faith through smoking meat.



It started with a backyard conversation at Pastor Terri Swan's house with her husband Joe and some others from the church. People started reminiscing about past pig roasts they had been involved with and thought it would be fun to do one again. That was 10 years ago. Now the Holy Smokers estimate they have smoked 18 ½ tons of meat, providing 73,000 meals.

It didn't happen overnight. They rented a grill for that first pig roast and did it for the Costa Rica mission team. After that, they borrowed a big smoker from Joe Swan's brother in southern Illinois and split the profits for some fundraisers.

Finally, in a spirit of "go big or go home," they went all-in on a custom-made smoker built by Heartland in Sikeston.

At maximum capacity (how else would you run it?), it can smoke 96 pork roasts at a time. At 10 pounds each, that's close to half a ton of meat. If you prefer chicken, it can smoke 128 at a time, but because they smoke in about 2 ½ hours, they will usually do two rounds for 256 chickens total. They take care to grade the wood off of the right pile — cherry for chickens and hickory for pork.

On a pork-smoking day, they will get things fired up at about 6 a.m. The pork goes on after about an hour, then smokes for nine to 11 hours, depending on the weather.

Although pork roasts and chickens are the go-to, they can expand the menu when called. In December, they do Christmas hams. This fall they'll be doing ribs for a special celebration.



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Serve God. Feeding God's people. Inviting men within the church
into the group. Inviting men outside the church into the group.



The Holy Smokers aren't just feeding the community. They're building one.



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4. Inviting men outside the church into the group.

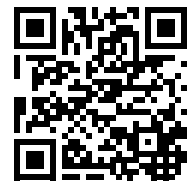
"None of us knew each other before this," Tim Jarvis said. "This brought us together."

The group gathers at the church for a breakfast meeting on the first Saturday of every month. They discuss upcoming smokes and name what tasks need to be done. Everyone has their calendars out, and people quickly speak up to volunteer.

They usually have about 20 men at each monthly meeting. It's a close group but not a closed group. "Remember to think about bringing someone new," Jarvis encouraged the others as they discussed upcoming events.

Once you're in, you're in. Their newsletter is called the Smoke Signal. It goes to about 80 men, some of whom no longer live in Missouri.

"I asked them if they wanted me to take them off the list, but each of them said no, we like hearing about what you're up to," Phil Cooper said.



The men in the group come from a variety of occupational backgrounds and span generations. In addition to their good work, the fellowship and support they give each other are notable.

"I think they are one of the healthiest men's groups I know of in the Missouri Conference," Missouri Conference Director of Connectional Ministries Rev. Kim Jenne said. "They take care of one another spiritually and emotionally and are committed to service in action."

For more info on the Holy Smokers, scan the QR code with your smart phone or visit www.salemstlouis.com/holy-smokers.