

Charlotte

JUNE/JULY 2019

# HOMIE

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COAST-TO-COAST  
EXCURSIONS



# ON THE ROAD

By Jim Noble  
Photography by The Plaid Penguin

We just wrapped another research trip for Noble Smoke last week.

There was a field-trip energy in the air as we gathered early at the Rooster's parking lot to begin our two-day excursion to some of Carolina's best barbecue places. Along the way, others joined us, including one of my oldest friends Randy. We were ten people strong. And hungry.

Someone brought Krispy Kreme donuts, a thoughtful act that makes me chuckle considering how much barbecue we were about to eat. It set the tone, though. We would be breaking (corn)bread together for the next two days.

Our first stop (and first tray of barbecue) was at Lexington Barbecue. Several of us sat with owner Wayne Monk and chatted with him for a good while. Others made conversation with his wife, Nancy, and the warm and friendly staff, who served up packed trays of coarsely chopped pork shoulder, hush puppies straight from the hot oil, slaw, and smoked-turkey sandwiches. It was ten in the morning,



but this did not slow anyone down. The eating continued even after we boarded the Sprinter van for our next stop.

"Be sure to try the turkey sandwich."

"Can you pass me a hush puppy?"

"What was your favorite?"

"Coarse chopped barbecue, all the way."



**"THE ACT OF SHARING A MEAL  
CREATES CONNECTION."**

It went on like this the whole day. Someone would place an order for the entire team; someone else would get the table; another person would grab the forks and extra plates. The food would arrive in bags, on trays, in Styrofoam containers, and we'd all get to work – cutting barbecue sandwiches in halves or quarters, passing the sides around, insisting that folks try this or that. By the time we were done visiting Sam Jones BBQ and Skylight Inn, we could probably pick each other's favorites off any menu.

Some of us work together every day and have traveled together in the past. Others were joining in for the first time. Regardless, we took care of each other at the table as though we were family. This could be because everyone is attached to the hospitality industry. But I think it's more than that. It's been written about many times, probably because it's so plainly true: the act of sharing a meal creates connection.

We find common ground, even if it's over a simple topic like what we enjoyed most on our plates. We learn about each other, even if it's just a basic fact, like the way someone prefers their tea – half and half, unsweet, not at all. We make hefty deposits in the memory bank as funny stories get swapped and new ones are formed.

New friendships often begin in this way. Old friendships get reinforced. Perhaps the only other thing that can accomplish this so quickly is a road trip. I'm looking forward to the next one. ♦

**CHEF JIM NOBLE** is the executive chef and owner of **NOBLE FOOD & PURSUITS**, **NOBLE SMOKE** and **BOSSY BEAUTS** are set to open in 2019. For more information, visit [NOBLEFOODANDPURSUITS.COM](http://NOBLEFOODANDPURSUITS.COM).