Barbeque Master 'OLD ARTHUR' Watts joins an elite group of highly accomplished pit masters & pioneers

Thanks to Eudell IV, his legendary recipes are still tickling tastebuds with sauces and rubs.



Old Arthur

EVANSTON, IL, UNITED STATES, September 23, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- From his humble beginnings as an enslaved boy in Missouri, Arthur Watts became a legendary pitmaster and creator of recipes that have won awards and are still inspiring his family's business. Now there is a new accolade to add to the list.

The man behind Old Arthur's barbecue sauces and rubs has been inducted into the Barbecue Hall of Fame, an honor bestowed by American Royal to recognize his impact on barbecue and succeeding generations.

> Our family's history and the history of America are never far from our minds. We are proud to be able to share this vital piece of history with our customers and the entire country."
>
> *Eudell Watts IV*

"Old" Arthur, who was still supervising community barbecues at 101, is one of three 2026 inductees.

"These inductees represent some of the very best in the barbecue community," said Pat Macy, CEO of the American Royal Association, a Kansas nonprofit that keeps alive the heritages of American food and agriculture. "They have helped shape barbecue through craftsmanship, innovation, mentorship and tradition.

"We are proud to recognize their lasting impact on barbecue culture."

Old Arthur and his fellow inductees will be honored at the 46th World Series of Barbecue planned for Sept. 30 to Oct. 4 in Kansas City.

In 2023, judges at the 2023 National Barbecue & Grilling Association Competition selected Old Arthur's Spicy Barbecue Sauce as the top entry in the "tomato spicy sauce" competition. The honor came on the heels of Old Arthur's first-place win in 2022 for its mild sauce.

And for two consecutive years, Barbeque News placed Old Arthur's Barbecue Sauce among the top 10 commercially available barbecue sauces. Additionally, Food & Wine Magazine called Old Arthur's "One of America's Best Barbecue Sauces."

"We are honored to be recognized by so many in the food industry," said Eudell Watts IV, who established the company with his father, Eudell Watts III, about 15 years ago, "but our family's history and the history of America are never far from our minds. We are proud to be able to share this vital piece of history with our customers and the entire country."



Sauces



Rubs

Young Arthur Watts lived in bondage on the farm of J.J. Watts, a slave-holding physician, in Randolph County, Missouri. At a very young age, Arthur was put in charge of the farm's barbecue pits, besides his other duties in the garden and kitchen. It was hot, time-consuming work, tending meat as it slow-roasted. He may have been one of the country's first pitmasters – and certainly one of the youngest.

Gradually, what started as his duty became his passion, and Arthur began concocting sauces and rubs to enhance the flavor of whatever he was roasting. It was the start of a family legacy that continues today, with Arthur's descendants operating Evanston-based Old Arthur's, whose barbecue sauces and rubs are based on their ancestor's secret recipes.

Emancipated at age 28, he went on to earn his living as a highly-regarded pitmaster, catering massive barbecues for city festivals, county fairs and large-scale social functions throughout central Illinois, still carefully guarding his recipes. He died at age 108 in 1945 – hence the "old" in "Old Arthur's – but not before his son, the first Eudell Watts, was able to write the recipes down.

The full product line-up of sauces and rubs can be found at www.OldArthurs.com and on Amazon.com. The sauces sell for an average retail price of $7.49 and the rubs for $10.99.

Watts IV said minimal changes were made to Arthur's recipes. "We were careful to stay true to the original flavors," he says. "It's a testament to my great-great grandfather's skill that the sauces and rubs he was concocting in the 1840s are still pleasing palates today.

"Although barbecue tools and methods have evolved over time, what was delicious 160 years ago is still delicious today."

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