During the 2011 competition BBQ season we were honored to be one of the teams sponsored by Fruita Wood Chunks , a Fruita, Colorado based supplier of premium, high quality BBQ smoking wood. Fruita offers a wide variety of woods, consisting mostly of fruit wood, including hard to find woods like peach and apricot. We were impressed by the quality of Fruita's wood as well as the service and pricing. Fruita offers free shipping on all orders. We especially liked the peach and pecan wood and feel it definitely gave us a competitive edge. We did much better in 2011 than 2010, including winning our first Grand Championship since moving out west.

In September, 2011 we competed at the Pork n Hops Challenge in Grand Junction, CO and had the pleasure of meeting Bert Fraser, founder of Fruita Wood Chunks , in person. Bert was there with his daughter Christina competing in the backyard cooker competition. We had a chance to ask Bert some questions and learn more about
Fruita Wood Chunks
and their products.

The Smoke Ring: When did you start Fruita Wood Chunks?

Bert: Fruita Wood Chunks started up in the January 2010. After being unsuccessful at finding any Cherry wood chunks in the "off season" at the local stores, I knew there were others like me in the similar situation. Cherry wood has always been a favorite of mine. Mixed with a little bit of hickory, ribs cooked with it are outstanding.

The Smoke Ring: What is different about the wood you sell compared to the other

vendors out there?

Bert: QUALITY!!! and price

We noticed a HUGE difference between the wood we normally bought at the local box stores and the wood we found grown locally. After a few months, and countless trips to the UC Agricultural Extension, we found that the difference was the sugar and moisture content. We spent 2010 giving out samples of different cuttings of wood at BBQ competitions. We received feedback from nearly everyone we gave our wood to. With this information we found out many different characteristics such as when the trees should be cut to obtain its peak flavor, how the wood should be stored, when the wood will no longer give off the "Pure Flavor", and a lot of other information that we like to keep to ourselves.

Our wood is also left in log form until we receive a order. We then cut the wood down to the customers desired size, box it and ship out, usually the same day. This assures that the wood chunks you receive havent been pre-cut, sitting in a hot warehouse or on a shelf somewhere drying out while waiting to be sold. Cut wood drys out 12 times faster than wood kept uncut or split. We are currently looking for a cold storage facility to store our wood in during the warm days of summer. We feel this will help keep it conditioned and retain the natural moisture.

We ship in boxes and not in plastic bags. This allows the wood to breath. If we shipped our wood in plastic bags, by the time it got to your front door it would have started molding. The wood in stores has no moisture in it therefore it won't mold but it will burn up twice as fast as our wood.

We scrapped over 32,000 lbs of wood this year because in our opinion it wasn't up to our quality standards for moisture content.

The Smoke Ring: Where do you obtain your wood?

Bert: We are blessed with living in the Fruit Basket of Western Colorado. The fertile soil and cool nights allow the fruit to ripen naturally and with this comes some awesome smoking wood. All the fruit wood is local to us, as well as the White Oak. We place ads in local papers looking for orchards to be cut down at the appropriate time for the trees to be harvested and achieve MAXIMUM flavor. We pressure the growers to let us into their orchards on our que not when they will allow us to. This guarantees us better quality wood.

The Smoke Ring: What are the different varieties of wood you offer?

Bert: We offer APPLE, CHERRY, PEACH, PEAR, PLUM, APRICOT, WHITE OAK, California RED OAK, California ALMOND, HICKORY, PECAN, and MAPLE. We are looking to be adding Mesquite in November 2011.

The Smoke Ring: How did you decide to target the competition BBQ market?

Bert: When we started cooking with local wood, we immediately noticed a huge difference in the flavor of our meats, but we knew we needed professional opinions. We knew that the competition circuit was a great place to start targeting after we had a great response during our research. The people in the BBQ competition circuit we eager to help and to this day I have not met any one that I wouldnt offer to stay at my home.

Although the BBQ competition circuit is a big happy family, they share information as much as possible. With the reviews we received and the many different flavor profiles achieved, we knew that targeting the competition market was the best way to share our product and give those that tried our wood a competitive edge.

We have had 22 Grand Championships this year from teams using our products. This includes The American Royal, Sams Club Invitational, and many other that we dont even know about.

The Smoke Ring: What are mini-splits?

Bert: Mini splits are something we came up with for users of UDS's, and larger smokers. They also work very well in WSM'S. They are the size of two of our chunks. (6" long x 2-3" across) They dont burn up as fast in the fire boxes which are on the larger smokers. They give the competition teams the convienence of not having to tend the smoker as often, because they burn longer than chunks. It also allows teams the opportunity to mix wood during the smoking process. We recommend a 4 to 1 ratio of fruit wood to hard woods like Hickory, Mesquite, and Oak. Customers order the larger splits as well as smaller boxes of the hardwood chunks to achieve that ratio. The mini splits are less expensive than the chunks because it takes less labor to produce a box of splits.

The Smoke Ring: Thank you for your time, Bert. We have really appreciated your sponsorhip this year and we wish you much success in the future. You have a great product, backed up by quality service, and that's a winning combination!