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How to control temperature on masterbuilt propane smoker

1 Locate the intake damper. The intake damper is located at the bottom of the smoker, where the fuel is. It controls how much oxygen reaches the fire. You can open and close it however much is necessary.[1] 2 Locate the exhaust damper. The exhaust damper is located near the top of the smoker. It helps pull the oxygen through the fire. It also allows the gases, heat, and smoke to leave the smoker. You should always leave the exhaust damper open least partway in order to maintain airflow.[2] Advertisement 3 Open the intake damper all the way to generate high heat. This setting may vary from recipe to recipe, but in general, it lays between 450 and 550 °F (232 and 288 °C). In order to get the smoker this hot, you need to open the intake damper all the way to allow the most oxygen in.[3] 4 Open the damper a quarter or halfway to get low or medium heat. The more you close the intake damper, the cooler the smoker will become. To get a medium heat range of 350 to 450 °F (177 to 232 °C), leave the intake damper open halfway. To get a low heat range of 250 to 350 °F (121 to 177 °C) leave the intake damper open a quarter of the way.[4] 5 Open the damper up to a quarter of the way to get a low, slow smoke. Some recipes call for a low heat or a slow smoke. This usually converts to 225 to 275 °F (107 to 135 °C). In order to get the smoker this cool, you should leave the intake damper open an eighth to a quarter of the way.[5] 6 Adjust the exhaust damper if adjusting the intake damper doesn't help. If the bottom vent is closed all the way and the temperature is still too hot, try closing the top vent a little—not all the way. You can also try removing some fuel with metal tongs. Never dose coals inside the smoker with water. On the other hand, if the smoker is running too cool, you can try opening the exhaust vent more.[6] Still having trouble increasing airflow? Prop the lid open a little. Advertisement 1 Keep the water pan full to maintain temperature. The water will help absorb the heat and regulate the temperature. Depending on the size of the pan, your smoker, and the temperature, expect to refill it every 3 to 4 hours. In most cases, you'll want to use hot water, but if the smoker is getting too hot, switch to cold water.[7] The water pan should be in the middle of the cooking section, right under the bottommost cooking grate.[8] 2 Don't peak. Much like using an oven, you should not peak at your food. Each time you open the lid, you will increase the airflow and temperature. The only time you should open the cooker is to turn the meat, check the fuel, or add water.[9] 3 Be careful not to overshoot your target temperature. It can take a long time before the temperature on the smoker starts to rise. Once the temperature starts to rise, however, it can shoot up pretty quickly. Be extra-vigilant during this time and make minor adjustments before the temperature reaches the target.[10] It is easy to overshoot your target temperature, but difficult to go back down to it. If the temperature is rising too fast, close the damper a little. The temperature will still rise, just at a slower rate. 4 Give your smoker time to adjust to the new settings. Any adjustments that you make to the intake damper or fuel won't happen immediately. Give it a couple minutes or hours before you try something new.[11] 5 Be aware that the temperature will fluctuate naturally as the food cooks. Meat will absorb more heat during earlier stages of cooking, resulting in slower temperature rises. As the meat cooks, it will absorb less heat, resulting in faster temperature rises.[12] The temperature may spike as your fuel breaks down. It should climb back down after about 15 to 30 minutes. Advertisement 1 Perform a dry run the first time you use the smoker. A dry run is where you run your smoker without any food. This will help you gauge how long it takes your smoker to reach a certain temperature. Write down how long it takes for your smoker to reach the right temperature. Keep this for future reference.[13] Use a lid thermometer to keep track of the temperatures inside the smoker. Some smokers have built-in thermometers, but these can be off by 50 °F (10 °C). 2 Make sure that the thermometer is away from the edge of the grate. Some parts of a smoker are much hotter than others. If you place your thermometer near these areas, you won't get an accurate temperature reading.[14] Some thermometers, especially electric ones, are just inaccurate or go bad. You should replace it when this happens. 3 Search for leaks if the temperature is inaccurate. If the temperature inside the smoker does not match the temperature on the damper, you may have a leak. This is especially common among cheap, barrel-shaped smokers. The leaks typically occur around seams. Once you find them, seal them with gaskets or food-safe silicone.[15] If sealing leaks did not help, try using the exhaust damper instead of the bottom ones to adjust the temperature. 4 Ensure that the smoker is clean. If the inside of the bowl or ash catcher are dirty, you will have poor airflow, which can affect the temperature. The bottom damper should also be clean to reduce clogs. If it is clogged, then you won't have enough oxygen reaching your fire, resulting in low temperatures.[16] If your smoker tends to run too hot, leave it smoky and greasy inside. This will make it less reflective and allow it to radiate heat outside the smoker.[17] 5 Adjust the intake damper on hot, cold, or windy days. If it is a hot or windy day, close the intake damper to reduce the temperature inside the smoker. If it is a cold day, open the damper in increase the temperature. If that doesn't help, try the following:[18] Hot day: move the smoker out of sunlight or shield it with a canopy or patio umbrella. Cold day: have extra fuel handy. Windy day: work downwind or move the smoker next to a wall to shield it. 6 Check the fuel if the temperature is not rising fast enough. If your intake damper is open and the temperature has not changed for several hours, give the charcoal or firewood a stir. If that doesn't help, add some more charcoal or firewood.[19] Switch up the brand of fuel. Sometimes, that is all that you need to do. Not all brands are created equal.[20] Lump charcoal tends to burn hotter and faster than coal briquettes.[21] If the smoke is white, the wood may not be burning properly. Open the intake damper to allow more oxygen and create a hotter fire. Advertisement Ask a Question Advertisement Thanks! Thanks! Thanks! Thanks! Advertisement Smoker Lid thermometer Water Charcoal or firewood This article was co-authored by wikiHow Staff. 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They do away with all the stress and difficult controls, and instead allow you to smoke food in a simple, affordable way. Our newcomers guide will walk you through exactly how to use a propane smoker, as well as give you some expert tips to make sure you get the very best results. Choose your smoker! The best propane smokers have a large capacity, and are vertical in shape. This is to allow good airflow while also give you a lot of cooking surface area to work with. They also have a clear control panel, and can achieve a cooking temperature of up to around 350°F. Because we're smoking and not grilling, we don't need excessive maximum temperatures. I recommend the Masterbuilt MPS. It has a huge cooking capacity (792 square inches), and has an incredibly construction build to ensure excellent heat retention and smoking temperatures. Start your smoker! Before you add any food, wet or dry wood chips, or other equipment, you will need to start up the smoker. Ignition systems can vary from unit to unit, but generally speaking there should be a simple ignition button and temperature settings on the control display of your smoker. This type of quick startup is one of the things that sets them apart from electric smokers. Before activating it, ensure that the connection from your propane tank is secure. We want the gas supply to be good, but also safe. Also check that the door to your smoker is firmly shut, and that your propane tank gauge is returning a good reading. Start the heat. Aim for a target cooking temperature of 225°F (107°C). This will usually only take 10-20 minutes for your smoker to heat up to. Prepare wood chips! Wood chips are an excellent way to enhance the flavors or your food. Popular wood chips are apple, oak, and hickory. Many smokers come with a smoker box to hold them. Measure out about one cup of chips, and put them in the smoker box or wood chip tray. Pro Tip: Don't soak your wood chips. This will ruin the quality of smoke at your barbecue. Add a water pan! Using a smoker water pan is a great way to improve the performance of your propane smoker. They can help stabilize the cooking temperatures in the unit (even in propane smokers), while also stopping your food from drying out. The best smoked meat is always moist and rich in juices, so using a pan is a great way to ensure we get these results. Water pans are very cheap to buy, and often come included with smoker units. Fill the pan with plain cold water. Place the pan in your preheated smoker on the very bottom of the smoker chamber. Failing that, put it on the lowermost cooking grate. The water in the pan will evaporate while you cook, so you might need to refill it during cooking. Try to keep an eye on it (your smoker might have a window in the door) and refill as needed. Pro tip: Don't use any added flavors in your water pan. Some people like to use beer, apple juice, or cider. I don't find that it has much of an effect, so I prefer to create flavors using wood, brines or marinades alone. Control vents and airflow! Your propane smoker may have air vents (also called dampers) included to help you manage the temperatures in your smoker. Oxygen is the main fuel for fire, so keeping on top of air regulation is crucial to good barbecue. Your smoke should have an intake damper at the bottom that allows air into the smoker; and an exhaust damper at the top that draws air out of the smoker. In simple terms, the wider your air vents are, the more oxygen will be fed to your flames and the hotter your cooking temperatures will be. When you start your smoker, set the vents completely wide open. This will help your smoker reach 225°F quickly. Once it has preheated, set the vents to halfway closed. This will help stop the acceleration in cooking temperature without extinguishing it. Pro tip: Each smoker is different, so there will be a learning curve in knowing exactly how to set your vents to achieve good heat levels. Don't be afraid to experiment and learn how small changes to the vents affect your cooking environment. Add your food! Now onto the real fun. Transfer your food to your smoker, placing it on the middle grates in the cooking chamber. Aim to place it directly above the water pan so that any juices or run-off can infuse the smoke from the pan with added flavor. Close the chamber door and leave to smoke for 225°F. Cooking times will depend on meat and weight, so check out my guide on best smoking meats for timing guides. Don't constantly check on the progress of your food. As tempting as it might be to open the door to see how it's getting on, this can significantly disrupt cooking temperatures and possibly ruin your meat. Pro tip: Allow your meat to rest at room temperature for at least 30 minutes prior to smoking. This can help improve results by minimizing the temperature swing as it cooks. Check wood chips and water! Check on your food after 2 hours (waiting until this time period is often referred to as The Golden Rule). Check that the temperature reading on the smoker is displaying a reading close to 225°F. Check to see if your wood chip box or water pan are nearly empty, and refill as needed. Close the door and allow your meat to finish smoking. Check the meat! As the target time for your meat approaches, use a meat thermometer to check on the progress of your meat. Do this by inserting the probe into the thickest part of the meat. Once the meat's done, remove it from the smoker and leave it to rest for 5-10 minutes before serving up. Do you soak wood chips for a propane smoker? No, do not soak your wood chips. There is a lot of debate among smoking fans around wood chip smoking, with many claiming that it helps to generate more smoke and can help temper the effects of exposure to high heats. This might be a solid argument when using a charcoal or offset smoker, but when the excellent temperature control you get with propane smoking means that this isn't necessary. Pre-soaking wood chips can generate gray or black smoke, which can be harmful to cook with. With propane smoking, we want to achieve a layer of thin, blue smoke. Using dry chips is the best way to ensure this. To read a full discussion on the practice, check out my post on soaking wood chips in an electric smoker. Still hungry? Check out more BBQ posts

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