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Barbe-eww

Textural problems hold back
a new Thousand Hills product.

Photo by Getty

PRODUCT:

Thousand Hills

Barbeque Shredded
Beef Brisket

PRICE:

\$10.99/14-ounce
package

PLUS:

Good flavor and
product messaging

PROBLEM:

Mushy texture
and unappetizing
appearance



A plethora

of products have harnessed the popular barbecue flavor. When we spotted refrigerated Thousand Hills Lifetime Grazed 100% Grass Fed Beef Barbeque Shredded Beef Brisket featuring Triple Crown Organic BBQ Sauce, not only did the barbecue flavor appeal to us, but so did the shredded beef brisket. Traditionally, barbecue brisket requires long, slow cooking that takes hours, so a product that delivered this in less than three minutes sounded ideal. Thousand Hills

Beef Brisket is available in select retailers in the U.S. and is also available for online purchase. Let's see what our evaluators thought about this new product.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Our brisket tasters ranged in age from junior high and up, all of whom enjoy good, meat-based barbecue.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Our tasters diverged wildly about the Thousand Hills brisket's various claims.

Some appreciated how the company had gone the extra mile

with the product.

"If it didn't say 'grass fed' and 'organic,' I wouldn't even look at it," one taster said. "We don't eat a ton of meat, but when we do, we make sure it's pretty premium. Grass fed and organic say 'premium.'"

However, many other tasters did not connect with the claims.

"What is 'Organic Barbeque Sauce'?" one taster asked. "Does it mean all the ingredients for the sauce are organic? I don't care about organic."

"All of the claims are meaningless to us

and wouldn't inspire us to purchase," remarked another taster.

Tasters also shared a valuable observation about the brisket's preparation. Unlike other heat-at-home products, the Thousand Hills packaging is not microwavable; thus, the brisket must be taken out of the package and placed in a microwave-safe bowl, which a couple tasters found inconvenient.

"Why can't I just heat it in the cup it came in?" a taster asked. "Is it because people who want all

TASTE *test*

this (organic, grass fed, regenerative...) wouldn't eat things heated up in plastic?"

APPEARANCE

Claims-based disagreements notwithstanding, our tasters were in universal agreement about the brisket's uncooked appearance.

"It's not like in the picture which has strands of meat," one taster said. "This is like mush/paste. I expect what's pictured."

Another taster was particularly descriptive: "It plopped into the pot in one gelatinous-looking blob. I spread it out, which then looked even more unappealing. It looked like dog food. The appearance was so bad I had to work up the nerve to eat it."

Other observations included: "It looks like it

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was put through a food processor," "I thought it was very liquidy," "It looks like it's been eaten once already," and "Looks like a lump of mush."

One taster did offer a qualifier: "Once it was put on a potato bun, it looked good."

TASTE, TEXTURE AND MORE

Consistent with their observations about the product's appearance, quite a few tasters struggled with the brisket's texture.

"The brisket was way too shredded up, so it didn't taste like it was meat," one taster stated. "It was so over-processed, it was mush."

Another taster shared, "The texture is too soft! It's stringy, can't even separate with a fork. I expect brisket to have some strands of visible meat."

And two more tasters reflected on how the

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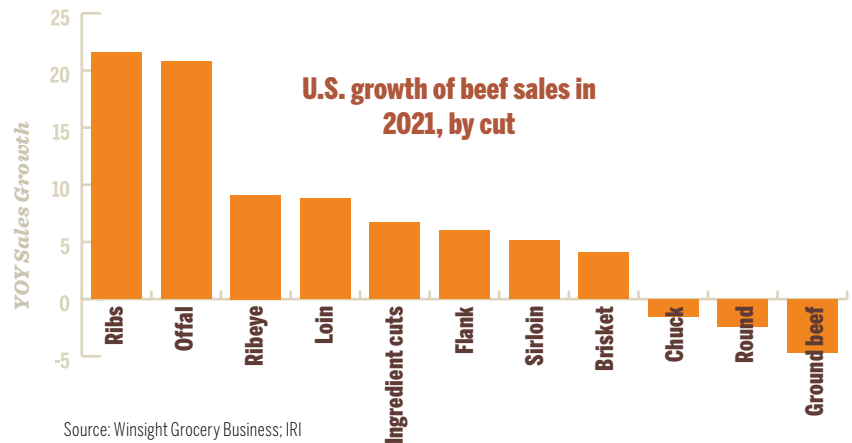
meat may have been processed. “The texture is too mushed — it looks like it was put through a meat grinder or food processor,” the first taster remarked. The second stated, “It was mostly mush, which felt really weird eating. When I think of a pulled beef sandwich, I [do not] think of ... some sort of beef puree with shredded beef mixed in.”

The brisket’s textural problems are unfortunate, because numerous tasters (even those quoted above) did appreciate the dish’s flavor.

“I’ve had a lot of barbecue, and this flavor was spot-on good,” a taster said. Others stated the dish was “good-quality barbecue,” “pretty good,” and “really great.”

Another taster remarked on the convenience: “I know smoking a brisket can take 10-plus hours, so this was nice that it was done in just 3 minutes!”

Sales of various beef cuts differed quite a bit in 2021. While sales of beef ribs and offal rose double digits over 2020, sales of chuck, round, and ground beef declined. Brisket, meanwhile, saw a modest 4.1% rise in sales.



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TASTE *test*

UPSHOT

Given the negativity of many tasters' earlier impressions, there was a surprising nuance to their final assessments of the Thousand Hills brisket.

For three tasters, the dish's flavor was appreciated, but the texture was inadequate (they described it as "mush" and "pasty").

Other tasters were sensitive to the product's price. One said, "The price is too high for every day, but we would serve to company as part of a high-end barbecue," with another adding, "I wouldn't buy it for myself, but would definitely buy it if I was hosting and knew people wanted/liked brisket."

One taster said that even though their family did not like the brisket, they would "buy it again for myself." And finally, one taster shared a concluding thought that encompassed many aspects of this Taste Test: "The flavor and messaging

around quality are there, but it should be shredded less. When you slow-cook meat like this, it tastes good."

CONCLUSION

Overall, Thousand Hills Barbeque Shredded Beef Brisket got poor marks for texture, which was not as expected. It did, however, garner positive comments on flavor, even though none of our tasters mentioned or were familiar with 'Triple Crown Organic BBQ Sauce.' Based on our tasters' comments, Thousand Hills did a good job with its Carolina-style barbecue seasonings and messaging. Given the price point and elevated expectations, the company's meat processing needs improving to yield "shredded" beef brisket, not "mushed." If Thousand Hills can do this, while also improving product distribution and pricing, the product could be a winner based on flavor.

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