

Fireflies

Likely as children, we all collected fireflies in a jar and took them to bed to light up our rooms on a warm summer night. I remember getting my parents to puncture the lid of a mason jar so the magical insects could breathe. Well, it turns out that all that light flashing was about love. So, as you enjoy summer evenings outside maybe take a second look at all that firefly flashing in a different light.

Researchers at Tufts University and Brigham and Woman’s Hospital



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have been observing the flashes of fireflies for more than two decades now and what they have uncovered may surprise you. The bioluminescence of the male firefly is his way of telling the female firefly that he is a worthy lover. Fireflies, which are actually beetles, spend their entire lives looking for love.

Female fireflies are rather promiscuous, mating with dozens of males in her lifetime and simultaneously carrying eggs from many different fathers. She can control

how many eggs are fertilized by her mates and she proves to be quite choosy, looking to a male’s flash pattern as an indicator of virility. There are hundreds of different firefly species worldwide and several out in the yard on any given night. The flash pattern also helps the species locate their own in a field of flashing singles looking for love.

In 2003 Sara Lewis, an evolutionary biologist at Tufts University, and her graduate student Christopher Cratsley set out to understand the meaning of the firefly’s flash and what they found was a direct link between flash

patterns and the “nutritional gift” the male gave to the female. Lewis explains that the “nutritional gift” is communicated in a male firefly’s flash code. Far from random, these flash codes tell females that the male is of her species, is ready for her and has a “nuptial gift” that contain sperm and nutrition. This is where the code is important because the nutritional component is crucial for the eggs to develop because the firefly eats nothing in its adult stage. According to Lewis’ research the duration of the male’s flash is a predictor of the quality

of the nuptial gift. More sperm and more nutrition mean more babies.

The science of it all is interesting and important as well. Bioluminescence has been understood for a long time now, but new light has been shed on the role nitric oxide plays. In humans, nitric oxide acts as a messenger in the body, controlling the flow of blood and aiding in memory in learning; in fireflies it is the key component in controlling the flash of the abdominal lantern, it acts as the on-off switch.

In the lab researchers were able to determine that the abdominal

lantern is dark and at rest while the mitochondria consumes the oxygen that is present in the cells (apparently mitochondria eat up oxygen quickly). When nitric oxide is produced it basically steals the oxygen from the mitochondria and the lights go on. It all happens in a split second and the beetle’s nervous system keeps the flash code going all night long.

A firefly’s flash or a peacock’s feathers; it seems that humans are not the only ones that try to attract a mate by being a bit flashy!

Glimpses from the fair



Photo courtesy of Don Sniegowski



Photo courtesy of Don Sniegowski

Kentucky has two cities ranked in the top 100 for BBQ

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Kentucky is known for several things, including basketball, bourbon, and horse racing.

When one thinks about BBQ, the Bluegrass State is probably far down the list when it comes to the best cities in the United States. Surprisingly, Kentucky boasts two of the Top 100 cities, and Owensboro isn’t one of them.

According to a recent study by lawnstarter.com, Louisville is ranked 24th and Lexington, 83rd, the only two cities to make the Top 500 list. To find out which cities have the best BBQ scene, the website looked at 13 metrics across nearly 500 of the biggest U.S. cities to rank the 2025 Best BBQ Cities in America.

“Authenticity and history are key components in identifying a true barbecue city,” said Tyler White, the Culinary Institute Program Manager at the University of Tennessee. “Aficionados should look for cities and regions that have a history of great pitmasters and family-owned businesses. The best barbeque cities have plenty of independently owned barbeque restaurants.”

Louisville came in with an overall score of 26.76, while Lexington scored 19.53. Louisville ranked 47th in consumer satisfaction, 20th in access, 100th in competition awards, and 25th in elite BBQ

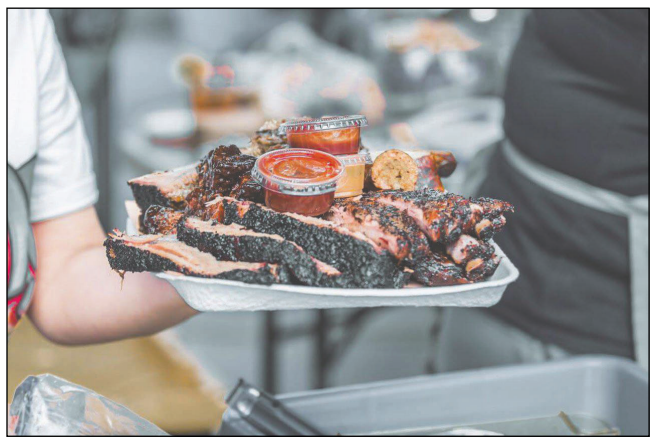


Photo by Luis Santoyo/lawnstarter.com

The website lawnstarter.com has released its list of the Best BBQ cities, with Louisville and Lexington ranked in the Top 100.

memberships, while Lexington ranked 72nd, 110th, 100th, and 62nd, respectively.

While Owensboro is known, at least in Kentucky, as the “BBQ Capital of the World,” the city’s population wasn’t large enough to be included in lawnstarter.com’s list. But the city, part of the Western Kentucky BBQ Belt, has three well-known restaurants (Ole South Barbeque, Old Hickory Bar-B-Q, and Moonlite Bar-B-Q Inn) along with hosting the BBQ & Barrels Festival and the International Bar-B-Q Festival.

According to herkentucky.com, the top five BBQ restaurants in Kentucky are Feast BBQ in Louisville, Old Hickory Bar-B-Q in Owensboro, Leigh’s BBQ in Kevil, Lyle’s BBQ Company

in Lexington/Nicholasville, and Moonlite Bar-B-Q Inn in Owensboro.

The overall best city for BBQ is Kansas City, followed surprisingly by Los Angeles. Rounding out the Top 10 are Houston, St. Louis, Austin, Texas, Chicago, Las Vegas, Memphis, Nashville, and New York. Kansas City, the self-proclaimed BBQ Capital of the World, features 23 BBQ establishments, and seven top-rated (4.5+ Stars) BBQ establishments. Los Angeles has the most BBQ establishments with a whopping 162, with Houston coming in just behind with 160. Austin had the most top-rated establishments with 21.

To see the full report, visit <https://www.lawnstarter.com/blog/studies/best-bbq-cities/>.

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