

June 6 Cook — Live Log

Captures what actually happened alongside the plan. Spine of the Sunday Reddit posts (r/smoking cook-forward, r/Claude planning-forward).

Photos at each phase. Plan vs. actual where it matters. Surprises, live decisions, what I'd change for #50.

Starting Conditions & Setup

Reference data — set early, referenced all cook.

- **Trimmed weights (post-trim, pre-smoke):** Prime **13.6 lb** / Choice **12.4 lb** (*the real cook-time driver — raw was 16.00 / 15.00*)
 - **Pellets:** type/blend __, hopper load at light __ (refills logged below)
 - **Weather at light:** temp __, humidity __, wind __
 - **Probe map (initial):** P1 = Prime, P2 = Choice, P3 = __, P4 = __
 - *Reassignments get logged in the Adjustment Log as they happen (e.g., P1→T1 at brisket pull).*
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Live Adjustment Log

The plan-vs-reality story — the heart of the r/Claude post. Append a line every time you change something: pit bump, timing slide, probe move, any audible. Timestamp, what, why.

- **2:45 PM** — Lit ~75 min later than the ~1:30 plan (aquarium return). No correction needed — dropping pork lightened the load, so a later light lands the finish nearer the ideal hold pocket instead of too early.
- **Early cook** — Prime (P1) reading ~15°F warmer internal than Choice (P2); both started ~42°F. Likely position + pan-shielding (Choice boxed between two pans) rather than just the transient cold-mass dip — the smaller Choice running *slower* points to heat delivery, not size. **Watch-item, no action:** too early to predict finish order; decision point is the trend through the stall (11pm / midnight). Wiggle room = 2 empty slots above the Prime; if the Choice lags into the stall, open its underside (pull bottom pan) before considering a rotate (rotate not preferred).
- **4:45 PM (~2 hr in)** — Spread closed: Choice 85.2°F / Prime 83.8°F internal, neck-and-neck. Watch-item resolved — the early 15° was the transient cold-mass stabilization, not a persistent shield (Andrew's equalize call was right). Ambient now shows top runs hotter (Prime 151°F vs Choice 137°F), but the Prime's larger mass offsets its hotter position → cuts climbing together. The ~2-hr Choice head start is a stall-and-beyond phenomenon; revisit whether it develops at the 11pm/midnight reads.

- **8:20 PM (~5.5 hr in)** — At the stall doorstep: Choice 143.3°F / Prime 140.4°F internal, pit steady at 250. Choice extending its lead (~3°F now) — head start beginning to develop as predicted. No bump, holding 250. With the lighter naked load, the live question at the midnight read is whether it runs *early* (long hold), not late.
- **6:00 AM** — Reconsidered the 275 bump (both ~160°F, ~5 hr to the 11 AM target). Held 250: the post-stall climb projects a ~10 AM–noon finish — squarely in the hold window — and bumping would only drag the finish earlier, back toward the too-early risk we managed all night. Reassess at 7 AM: climbing into the high 160s/170s → hold; still pinned ~160 → then a modest bump to protect a 1 PM-latest finish.
- **6:12 AM** — Prime graph shows a *prolonged soft stall*: creeping ~1°F/hr since the ~6h mark, now 160.7°F — never broke out like the Choice (climbing fine at 162.8°F, ~4–5°F/hr). Prime is the driver and at ~1°F/hr won't make a workable 12–1 PM finish (needs ~6°F/hr). **Called the 275 bump** — the too-early risk that held us at 250 all night is gone for this slow cut; 275 just pulls it back toward the window, quality-neutral per the plan. Speeds the Choice too (fine — lands in hold sooner). **Executed 6:20 AM — pit to 275.** (Andrew had already planned the bump at his 5:30 read; ran the graphs past Claude without tipping his hand, as an independent check — both reads converged on 275.)
- **7:19 AM** — Bump confirmed working: Prime accelerated from ~1°F/hr (soft stall) to ~6°F/hr post-275 (167.2°F); Choice ~7°F/hr (171.4°F). Both cleanly out of the stall. Finish projecting Choice ~12:30–1 PM / Prime ~1:30–2 PM — modest ~1–1.5 hr stagger re-forming. 275 holds; no further escalation. The bump pulled the Prime back from a ~3 PM drift into a workable window.
- **8:13 AM** — Choice cruising (179.2°F, ~8.7°F/hr → ~11:30 AM finish; nearing the ~190 feel-check). Prime eased again, ~6→~4.3°F/hr (167→171 over the hour), projecting a too-late ~3:30 PM finish. **Recommended nudging the pit 275→285** to protect the driver's finish — free setpoint change (no door-open), lopsided asymmetry (downside ≈ nil; upside = avoiding a no-hold scramble on the showcase). Choice finishing earlier is fine (long hold = feature for the burnt-ends cut).
- **9:13 AM** — Choice 189.5°F (~10°F/hr) — at the ~190 feel-check point, finish ~10:25 AM (Andrew home 10:15, will pull on arrival). Prime confirmed dragging: 171→174.9 = ~3.8°F/hr (slower than the 8:13 read), projecting a too-late ~4:30 PM finish. Two slow reads = not noise. **Recommended pushing the pit to 290 now, remotely** (Andrew's out on party errands, can change setpoint by phone) — don't lose the hour waiting to get home; reassess to 300 at home (10:15) if still under ~5°F/hr. Watch the Prime probe battery (low-battery icon showing) — swap to charged when home so the driver isn't lost.
- **9:35 AM** — Choice 193°F (~9.5°F/hr → tender ~10:40–50, after the 10:15 home time). Prime 177.1°F — *ticked up to ~6°F/hr* (from 3.8 at 9:13); if it holds, finishes ~2 PM on its own (bump becomes insurance, not rescue). **Reprioritized (Andrew's call, sound): hold the bump until 10a** rather than pushing remotely now — the nearer, less-recoverable risk is the Choice over-finishing before he's home; the Prime's 25-min delay is trivial and absorbable. Prime lateness now a *managed*

scenario: turkey-in-parallel contingency (turkey on a lower rack, drip pan shielding, Prime finishing above) + a short Prime hold being workable = no fire.

- **9:37 AM (sharp read — Andrew's)** — Used the Prime's *ambient* probe as a leading indicator of stall/evaporation state, not the lagging internal. Ambient sits in the boundary layer off the surface; while the surface is wet, latent-heat draw holds it suppressed below pit temp. Prime ambient 205 = still shedding moisture / still braked; Choice ambient 233 (already past 212) = brake off, climbing fast, nearly done — a live side-by-side proof of the model. **212°F = the threshold (boiling): once surface-air clears it, water can't persist, the evaporative brake releases, internal runs to finish ~1 hr later.** Revises the Prime finish *up* to ~11–11:30 AM — the earlier 3.8°F/hr → 4:30 PM estimate was lagging-indicator extrapolation (the Meater's own mistake). Practical: at 10a, if ambient's through 212, the bump is pure insurance (maybe skip); if still ~205–210, a small nudge to dry the surface.
- **10:10 AM (home)** — Dual readout. **Choice P1: 198.4 int / 233 amb** (brake long gone, Meater "25m") → probe-and-pull on tenderness (feel, not the 203); separate point/flat at the pit while the seam's hot, wrap each, flat → cooler (post-inject w/ Prime drippings later), point → set aside for burnt ends once pit frees. **Prime P3: 178.7 int / 208 amb** (4° shy of the 212 line). **DECISION — BUMP #2, 275→290 now:** the reason it was held at 9:35 (Choice over-finishing while away) is resolved — home and pulling Choice — so the bump's clean. 290 carries the Prime through 212 and runs it home rather than waiting on it. Hold at 290, no higher (ambient at the cusp = nudging, not fighting). Projected Prime finish ~midday → long easy hold to the 4:20 slice. Phone at 22% flagged.
- **10:15 AM** — Prime P3 **179.0 int / 211 amb** — *one degree* off the 212 line, about to go vertical. Two tailwinds: the 290 bump still pushing + Choice coming off (drops a heat sink → faster pit recovery, more heat to Prime). NOTE (nuance for the post): the door-open to probe/pull the Choice will *sag* the ambient transiently — that's the air cooling, **not** a re-stall. Surface is already dry (that's what got it to 211); a minute of cooler air doesn't re-wet it, so the evaporative brake doesn't re-engage. Ambient dips, then climbs back through 212 as the chamber recovers. Costs minutes, not the stall.
- **10:38 AM** — Prime P3 **180.8 int / 224 amb** — **ambient BROKE 212** (224, well past). Model confirmed: the door sag recovered and blew straight through the line — brake's off. Internal still showing the lag (~5°/hr, includes the door dip) — vertical imminent as heat flux catches up; watch the rate jump to double digits. Projected finish **~12:15–12:30**, ~4 hr hold to the 4:20 slice. Meater ETR "7h 8m" (will collapse once internal runs). Phone at 14% — plug-in nudge given.
- **10:30 AM — Choice OUT.** Point/flat separated at the pit (hot seam), wrapped separately, into the preheated cooler to hold. Point rests there until the Prime's off and the pit frees → then cube for burnt ends (no chamber-crowding during the Prime's finish). Flat holds alongside; to be post-injected with drip-pan au jus. **Pit bumped to 290** for the Prime's vertical run. From here: single-brisket finish, all eyes on the Prime.
 - **QUALITY SIGNAL (Choice separation):** Started a knife on the point/flat seam — it let go on its own when the flat was lifted, no knife needed. Clean

seam release = seam fat + connective tissue *fully rendered*; the good kind of fall-apart (muscles hold integrity, not mushy/overcooked shred). Tactile confirmation the probe-tender pull was dead-on, and the receipt for the long-stall rendering strategy (the evaporative brake we let ride all night *was* the rendering). Predicts: flat slices tender/moist, point primed for burnt ends.

- **11:27 AM** — Prime P3 **185.2 int / 223 amb** (~5.4°/hr over the last 49 min). **RECALIBRATION (Claude over-called the "vertical" at 10:38)**: brake released (ambient past 212, surface dry) but this is a steady ~5°/hr grinder, not an exploder — big cut, core is conduction-limited, so the drama shows on the *ambient/green* line while the deep internal climbs at its own pace. Revised finish ****~2:00–2:45 PM**** (lean ~2:30; may pick up slightly in the last stretch). This is actually a *better* landing than the noon call — gives the showcase a clean 1.5–2 hr rest to the 4:20 slice. **DECISION: hold 290, don't chase higher** (pushing risks rushing the render on the centerpiece). Note for the r/Claude writeup: both the Meater *and* Claude mis-estimated the finish, in opposite directions — the cut grinds at its own rate. Phone now 19% & charging (plugged in). Turkey overlap w/ Prime now longer (~2–3 hr coexisting, lower rack + shield) — both land mid-afternoon, hold to serve.
- **12:30 PM** — Prime P3 **192.5 int / 231 amb** (~7°/hr — picked up a touch from the 5.4 grind). Finish ****~2:00 PM****. **TURKEY AUDIBLE: not in yet** (planned noon); going on **by 1 PM** — Andrew's call on bandwidth + readiness (sound; no point cramming it in before set). **TIMING CORRECTION (Claude)**: a flat 290 risks the breast drifting to ~4:00 = too tight for the 4:30 oven-crisp / two-wave serve. Plan → 290 while Prime finishes, then **lift pit to ~315 once Prime's off (~2)** to drive the turkey home for ~3:30. Oven (425) owns the skin, so a hotter pit is pure upside (faster + skin handled separately). Pull turkey 157–160 (low end). **Turkey is now the schedule driver**. Burnt ends ride that same ~315 (point cubed at Prime-off ~2) — candy faster, watch & sauce-when-set; burnt ends = the flex item (hold/reheat fine), turkey must hit its mark. Phone 33% & charging.
- **12:45 PM** — **Prime Meater probe (P3) DIED at 195 int** — the low battery we'd flagged finally gave out. 🗑️ Capstone to the Meater-ETA running joke: 22-hr cook, the instrument that never predicted the finish couldn't survive to see it. **Non-event** — the probe did its real job (continuous eyes *through the stall*); the final ~8° is a feel check, not telemetry. Fix: freed Choice probe (P1) if still charged, else instant-read; probe-tenderness checks from ~1:15, pull on feel (~203) — same no-resistance as the seam separation. **Accelerated to ~10°/hr** (192.5→195 in 15 min) → finish revised ****~1:30 PM**** (earlier than the 2:00 call) → bigger hold to the 4:20 slice + pulls the whole back end (point cube, turkey pit-bump to ~315) ~30 min forward.
- **1:00 PM** — **TURKEY ON** (lower rack, drip-pan shield, pit at 290 with the Prime finishing above). Hit the 1 PM audible deadline. Probe allocation: working probe (freed Choice P1 / instant-read) goes in the *turkey* now — Prime is a feel-pull. Next cluster ~1:30 (Prime off): feel-pull the Prime, cube the point for burnt ends, bump pit to ~315 — turkey + burnt ends both ride that heat to serve.
- **1:10 PM** — **PRIME PULLED at 201** (feel-pull, probe-tender). Correct call: feel over the 203 number, carryover finishes it in the wrap. **The schedule-driver is home.** ~3

hr hold to the 4:20 slice = dead-center sweet spot. Cluster triggered: vent ~10 min to set bark → wrap **butcher paper (not foil)** → insulated bag → preheated cooler. While venting: cube the rested point → burnt-ends skillet; bump pit to ~315 for the turkey. **Save the drip-pan au jus** (Choice-flat injection + serving au jus). Cook duration ~22.5 hr.

- **2:16 PM** — Turkey check (freed probe now in the bird): **105 int / 228 amb** (pit at **300** — actual, corrected from the ~315 rec), on since 1 PM. ~1–1.5 hr to the 157 target → finish ****~3:15–3:45****, on/ahead of the ~3:30 target; good runway to the 4:30 oven-crisp. Note: turkey's the one cut where the Meater ETA ("59m") is actually trustworthy — no stall to fool it. **Burnt ends deferred** (bandwidth — Andrew prioritized the turkey push; correct, they're the flex item: hold/reheat). Window: skillet in within ~the hour, latest ~3:15–3:30 to be hot for serve, can ride *alongside* the turkey at 300 (no need to wait for the pit to clear). Pull turkey at 157, hold wrapped, oven-crisp first half 4:30. Phone 35%.
- **~2:20 PM (pit-temp decision, logged per Andrew)** — **Turkey running at 300, not 315**. Andrew's call: 300 is already on the hot side for his comfort, didn't want to bump again if not needed. Has **wiggle room both ways** from here. Sound — 300 drives the bird fine and is friendlier to the burnt ends than 315 (closer to candy range, shares the chamber cleanly). Lever held in reserve = same discipline as the Prime bumps. At 300 the turkey lands **~3:30–3:45** (still clean runway to the 4:30 oven-crisp); nudge up only if it drifts past ~3:45.
- **3:15 PM** — **BURNT ENDS IN at 315** (Andrew nudged pit 300→315, spending some up-lever — drives the bird home + candies the ends faster given the later start). Phase 1 (candy/render), **no sauce yet** (correct). Cubes look well-rendered with heavy bark (photo) — *several already dark*, so at 315 watch closely: check ~35–40 min, sauce on **tackiness/gloss, not a fixed clock**, to avoid pushing past caramelized into bitter. Watch the pan bottom (scorch); splash au jus if glaze reduces fast. Sauce ~3:55 → set 15–20 → **done ~4:15**, hot for serve. 315 also lands the turkey ~now.
- **3:26 PM** — Turkey **151.1 int / 190 amb** — 6° from the 157 target. Low ambient (190 vs 315 chamber) = shielded lower-rack microclimate gave a **gentle, moist finish** (how you want a breast to land), which is also why the last degrees crawl (small gradient). Pull **~3:45–3:55** right at 157 (or a hair under, lean low) — the 425 oven-crisp finishes it past safe + crisps the skin, so pulling low protects moisture. Then wrap, hold, first half to oven 4:30. On schedule. Burnt-ends sauce check converges ~3:50. Phone 40%. Meater "Estimating" (rate slowed on the gentle finish).
- **~3:50 PM** — Turkey at **155**, coming out (lean-low pull, oven-crisp finishes past safe + crisps skin). Cowboy butter already made independently (serves as the bright second sauce). **Leftover compound butter → brush on the turkey skin right after each oven-crisp** — light pass while the skin's screaming hot so it melts to a gloss and blooms the garlic/herbs; don't soak (protects the crisp). Brush each half as it comes out (two-wave).
- **3:50 PM** — **TURKEY OUT at 156.9** (dead on the 157 target), 3h13m cook. **Skin came out gorgeous** — deep even bronze, taut, glossy (the butter-under-skin + baking-powder dry treatment + smoke delivered exactly the color/texture

intended). "Below USDA" flag expected & handled: carryover → ~160 during rest + the 425 oven-crisp takes it past 165 safe before plating (pulled low on purpose to protect moisture; oven does the safety). **All three proteins now off the pit.** Next: rest ~40 min, split into halves for two-wave, oven-crisp first half 4:30 + compound-butter brush, serve. Phone 41%.

- **4:45 PM — ALL PULLED, ALL SLICED, READY TO SERVE.** ~15 min ahead of the 5:00 serve, fully staged. Turkey skin came out **competition-grade** (final photo — deep bronze, glossy, flaky salt + cracked pepper, butter sheen from the post-crisp brush). **Every protein landed on target.** Cook brought in *early* after ~25 hr through the overnight stall, two pit bumps, the probe death at the 1-yard line, and a string of clean audibles. → Serve. (Retrospective material all captured above for the r/smoking + r/Claude writeups whenever Andrew circles back: ambient-212 stall-end insight, the false convergence at 160, both Meater & Claude mis-calling the vertical in opposite directions, the seam-release quality signal, lever discipline on the bumps.)
- **10:45 PM — POST-COOK RESULTS (the verdict).** Last guests gone. **ZERO leftovers** across 52 guests — the cleanest possible validation of yield/portioning. **Protein ranking by hit:** (1) **Burnt ends** — hit of the night (the deprioritized flex item stole the show; Claude's "sleeper hit" call landed); (2) **Prime**; (3) **Turkey**; (4) **Choice** — landed last *because* of the heat (the retuned rub: doubled pepper + cayenne + coriander), but the adults ate it up = exactly its intended adult lane. Two-brisket / two-profile strategy validated. Night: adult-vs-kid wiffle ball, beers, celebratory Fireball shots — "awesome night." **Photo gap:** missed the money shot of the Prime sliced; captured Choice, turkey, burnt ends. (Add a glamour slice next cook for the writeup.) → COOK COMPLETE.
- **3:26 PM — Turkey 151.1 / target 157 / ambient 190** (ambient sag = door-open from loading the burnt ends at 3:15, recovering — irrelevant to the pull). ~6° out, climbing ~39°/hr → hits 157 **~3:35–3:40**. **PULL at 157** (lean low — even 155–156; turkey overshoots fast and the 425 oven-crisp finishes it past 165). Then wrap/hold warm → oven-crisp first half 4:30 → serve 5:00. This is the cut where *late* costs you. Phone 40%.

Pre-Cook Prep (Tue–Thu)

Tuesday, June 2 — Trim, Brine, Tallow

Plan: Trim both packers. Render tallow from trim (225°F, 2–3 hr). Measured-salt dry brine — **44 g** on the 16.00 Prime, **41 g** on the 15.00 Choice (0.6%). Uncovered into the meat fridge.

Actual:

- Trimmed weights (→ Starting Conditions): Prime **13.6** / Choice **12.4**
- Trim fat yield → tallow rendered (~ cups):

- Salt actually applied (g): Prime **37** / Choice **34** — 0.6% of *trimmed* weight (13.6 / 12.4). (*Plan doc lists 44 / 41 = 0.6% of raw; we salted trimmed to dodge the ~18% over-salt. Plan = as-written, this = as-built.*)

Photos:

- [Trim — Prime, fat-cap side]
- [Trim — Choice, fat-cap side]
- [Tallow rendering]
- [Salted, uncovered, in the fridge]

Notes:

Thursday, June 4 — Inject + Rub

Plan: Pre-inject the Prime (TOP) brisket, lean flat, grid pattern (beef broth + Worcestershire + MSG). ~6 PM apply salt-free rubs to both. Back uncovered in the fridge until the pit.

Actual:

Photos:

- [Injection mix]
- [Pre-injection in progress]
- [Both briskets rubbed]

Notes:

Cook Day (Fri–Sat)

Friday, June 5 — Light

Plan: ~1:30 PM pit light (lean to the later end of the 12:30–2 window — lighter 2-brisket load runs faster, so too-early is the likelier miss; hold 250). Just load and light — rubs already on. Stack top→bottom: Prime, drip pan, Choice, drip pan; bottom rack open as the late-brisket turkey flex slot.

Actual:

- Pit lit / briskets on: **2:45 PM** (*later than the ~1:30 plan — aquarium return; fine, the lighter no-pork load makes a later light land the finish better*)
- Ambient temp / wind:
- Probe placements: **Choice = probe 1, Prime = probe 3** (other slots open; reassign one to the turkey at brisket pull)

- Starting internal temps (at load): **Prime 42.2°F / Choice 41.3°F** (*near fridge-temp — tempered as long as practical, but big cuts hold cold; non-issue, longer sub-140 window = better smoke ring*)
- Pit at target temp:

Photos:

- [Briskets going on]
- [Rack stack from the door]
- [Pit at temp]

Notes:

Friday Evening — Turkey Brine + Overnight

Plan: 5 PM turkey into the cider/ACV brine (no salt, 18% bird = flavor soak only). 11 PM bundled pit check + turkey pull → rinse, pat dry, baking-powder dust (no salt), compound butter under skin → uncovered fridge for dry phase. Midnight stall read, bump to 275°F if behind.

Actual:

- Turkey in brine: **~4:45 PM** into the no-salt cider/ACV flavor bath → fridge; pull at the 11 PM check (6-hr soak)
- 11 PM pit temp / brisket internal temps: **11:30 PM — the one chamber-open of the night**. Pellets topped for the overnight stretch. Visual: deep mahogany bark setting on both, surfaces glistening (stall sweat — normal), both drip pans catching good amber drippings (au jus / Choice post-injection stock building), pit floor clean. (Internal temps not pulled this check — last read 9:47 PM: Prime 148.6 / Choice 142.4, both mid-stall.) Door sealed; no reopen until ~190°F.
- Turkey out, dusted, buttered, into fridge: **~10:45–11 PM** — out of the 6-hr bath (right on time), aromatics picked off, patted dry, compound butter under the skin, baking-powder dust on the skin (no salt), uncovered into the fridge for the dry phase. Leftover compound butter saved (→ possible cowboy-butter base / turkey finish).
- Midnight: top brisket IT / decision on 275 bump: **~11:50 PM read — Prime 151°F (soft stall, still creeping), Choice 143°F (deep, dead-flat stall ~4 hrs)**. Decision: **NO bump, hold 250**. The deep stall is the brake we wanted — pushing the finish toward morning and killing the too-early risk; trending on-time, not behind. Note: the Choice's stubborn stall scrambles the ~2-hr head-start assumption — Prime now leads on temp, but finish order is genuinely uncertain (smaller Choice can climb fast once it breaks). Reassess only if either is still planted below ~160°F by ~4–6 AM.

The stall (its own capture — the defining event):

- Prime: entering stall ~9:45 PM (~148–150°F) — higher and later than the Choice; curve bending but still creeping, not a hard flatline (bigger mass → softer, more drawn-out stall). Never fully flatlined — crept to 151°F (11:50 PM), **159.7°F by 5:33 AM**. Note: at 5:33 AM both converged at ~160°F (Choice 160.3 / Prime 159.7) — the predicted ~2-hr Choice head start did NOT materialize; they're climbing out together.
- Choice: entered stall ~7:15–7:45 PM (~138–142°F); planted flat ~142–143°F through 11:50 PM (~4+ hr flat — slight dip to 142.4°F at 9:45 confirmed full engagement), then broke overnight — **160.3°F and climbing by 5:33 AM**. Picture-perfect plateau on the Meater graph; ETA stayed N/A throughout.
- Did the plan predict it? (timing vs. doc):
- Pellet refills overnight (clock / amount):

Photos:

- [Brine setup]
- [Turkey dusted/buttered, going to dry phase]
- [Late-night pit shot]
- [Meater curve screenshot showing the stall]

Notes:

Saturday Morning — Briskets Finish

Plan: Choice (smaller, bottom) finishes first — separate point/flat **at the pit while it's done**, wrap each separately, into the holding bag → cooler. Prime drives the 11 AM finish. Pull when probe-tender by feel, not by number.

Actual:

- Choice off the pit (clock, IT, feel — *what did "done" feel like?*):
- Choice separated — point/flat seam notes:
- Prime off the pit (clock, IT, feel):
- **Finish gap between the two** (actual vs. ~2 hr prediction): 5:33 AM both read ~160°F — but a *false convergence*: two trajectories crossing (Choice sprinting up off a broken stall, Prime crawling through a soft one it never left). A spot-temp check there was maximally misleading — same level, opposite slopes. Post-275-bump a real stagger re-formed: by 7:19 AM Choice 171.4 (~7°F/hr) vs Prime 167.2 (~6°F/hr), projecting Choice ~12:30–1 PM / Prime ~1:30–2 PM (~1–1.5 hr gap). Partial staggered workflow back. (Final gap TBD at pull.)
- Hold setup confirmed (paper → bag → cooler):
- Hold start times (Prime / Choice flat) — for total-hold math at serve:

Photos:

- [Choice off the pit]

- [Seam separation in progress]
- [Prime off the pit]
- [Slicing-side faces]
- [Hold stack]

Notes:

Saturday Midday — Burnt Ends + Turkey On

Plan: Strain Prime's pan drippings, keep hot. Post-inject the Choice flat during the point's firm-up rest. Cube point, tallow toss, rub + sugar, pan up. Turkey on ~11:30–12 at 275°F. Burnt ends on ~12:30–1.

Actual:

- Drippings strained (volume ~):
- Choice flat post-injected — *did it take cleanly? injector clog?*:
- Point cubed and panned:
- Turkey on:
- Burnt ends on:

Photos:

- [Drippings/injection]
- [Cubed point + tallow toss]
- [Burnt ends pan]
- [Turkey on the rack]

Notes:

Saturday Afternoon — Burnt Ends Off / Turkey Pulls

Plan: Burnt ends off ~2–2:30 → crock pot or warmer (sauce last 15–20 min). Turkey hits 157–160°F → pull, hold loosely.

Actual:

- Burnt ends off (clock, look):
- Turkey IT at pull (clock, probe):

Photos:

- [Burnt ends finished]
- [Turkey off the pit]

Notes:

Saturday Pre-Serve (4–5 PM)

Plan: ~3:45 pre-stage carving station, light chafers. ~4:15 hot sides to hot-hold. ~4:20 begin slicing Prime + Choice flat. ~4:30 turkey first half into 425°F oven (10–15 min). ~4:45 first half sliced, everything to the line; second half held for the ~30–45 min second wave.

Actual:

- Pre-stage done:
- Slicing started:
- Turkey #1 in oven:
- Turkey #1 sliced:
- Line set:

Photos:

- [Carving station, briskets unwrapped]
- [Sliced Prime showcase]
- [Sliced Choice flat]
- [Burnt ends plated]
- [Turkey #1 sliced]

Notes:

5:00 PM — SERVE

Photos:

- [The full spread]
- [The line / plates moving]
- [First plate]
- [The crowd / the kid]

Notes:

Quality & Taste (the payoff)

Fill at serve / first plate — this is what the post is actually about.

- **Prime sliced (showcase):** bark, juiciness, smoke ring, tenderness —
- **Choice flat (sliced):** how it held up as the secondary slice —
- **Burnt ends (Choice point):** texture, render, bark-to-bite —

- **Turkey (the 18% bird):** did the de-salt + cider soak rescue it? skin crisp? salt level? —
 - **Experiment — post-injection:** was the post-injected Choice flat noticeably juicier than the Prime flat? Verdict for #50 —
 - **Prime vs. Choice side by side:** worth the hunt? —
-

Post-Cook Retrospective

What held to plan:

What surprised:

What I'd change:

Yield reconciliation (what ran out, what was left — *did ~22 lb smoked meat + sides cover 52 without pork?*):

Best part:

For #50:

Last updated: [auto-fill as you go]