



James Gimenez started Back 40 BBQ after a friend hired him for a birthday party in 2013. Since then, he has put his barbecues and recipes to work in the community.

## Family, Fun and Some Back 40 BBQ

*Tasty barbecue and quality service help local barbecue shine in the catering business*



**By Dale Anderson**

Big Bend Electric Co-op members who attended the annual meeting in Basin City were treated to a barbecue lunch catered by Back 40 BBQ, owned by James Gimenez.

“A friend of mine was having an 80th birthday party for her dad and she told me, ‘You’re coming to the party; you’re going to cook, and we’re going to pay you,’” James says.

That was April 2013, which is when James started thinking he could do part-time catering. He started with smaller events, such as Simplot’s end-of-harvest

celebration and other special events.

“In April 2016, the director at Pasco Specialty Kitchen told me I needed to participate in Pasco’s Food Truck Friday event,” James says. “Food Truck Friday needed someone to fill the barbecue gap, so I did it.”

James made chicken, ribs, beans and spuds, and sold them by the plate, which was something new.

When surveys of people who bought food at the event were evaluated, Back 40 BBQ had the highest rating of all the vendors.

“We received five stars on quality of products, but we fell a bit short on the



**James manages his full-time work and catering so he can spend time with his family. Back 40 BBQ provided the meal at Big Bend Electric Co-op's annual meeting.**

speed of getting the food out," James. "We are not a vendor like the food trucks. We knew how to make great food and how to get it to the people, but dishing up the plates is where we fell short. But what really matters is how much the people enjoyed eating our food."

As word-of-mouth spread and business grew, James relied more on his education.

"I went back to school in my 30s," he says. "I graduated in 2006 from WSU with a degree in business and operations. My best class was entrepreneurship. My group earned the highest grade in the class with a business plan I developed. I can honestly say that I have utilized my college education in creating this catering business."

James says it takes more than great recipes to be successful, and that includes mentors, such as his boss when he worked at Red Lion as a 17-year-old.

"I had a boss who was very demanding," James says. "I think he might have been former military. He taught me how to do it the right way and to run a tight ship. I've never forgotten how important that was."

"Today, I am a stickler for doing everything right with no short cuts. Things go a lot smoother that way."

James says the increased business helped him pay for equipment, food and supplies, but he was spending more time

away from home. Because most events took place on weekends, he was spending less time with his wife, Elena, and their sons Michael, Jonathan and David.

"Now we focus on wedding receptions and 50th anniversary celebrations as well as other special events," James says. "I don't do as many events, but they are a lot more personal. I get to visit with guests and make sure everyone is enjoying their meal."

James works full time for Pro Ag-Crop Logic Monday through Friday, which he says allows him to be involved with his kids' extracurricular activities.

"My long-term goal is to be a full-time caterer, but for now I need to see how an event fits into an already busy schedule," he says.

With his future goals in mind, James and his employees do their best to ensure quality service at each event.

"We have a pre-game meeting before to make sure everything flows smoothly and is consistent," he says. "Each person needs to go through the checklist to make sure nothing is forgotten. There is nothing worse than having to call your wife up and tell her you forgot to bring enough butter."

James says the key to having a special event is in the planning and training.

"Cooking for a lot of people is

frightening, but I've had some really good mentors that I have helped as a volunteer and their expertise has helped me immensely," James says.

"Cooking for large groups of people you could say is in my blood. My Uncle Sal and my dad had cooked at many events when I was young. My uncle, a farmer, cut a 55-gallon drum in half and, with a little welding, turned it into a barbecue."

Elena offers her perspective of James' catering venture.

"I thought it was kind of crazy at first, when I saw the Traeger barbecues," she says. "But when I saw how much he enjoyed it, I thought, 'Well, it's definitely his passion.'"

Why the name Back 40 BBQ?

"I did a wedding reception at a winery, and it was not a great experience," James says. "Let's just say the owner was not very nice to me. When I was traveling home making my third trip down Taylor Flats Road with barbecues and supplies in the truck—sweating on a very hot day and smelling like smoke—I looked all around at the rural setting and thought, 'These are the people that are my customers. These folks living on the back 40 are the ones who can appreciate my business!'" ■

*For more information, go to [www.b40bbq.com](http://www.b40bbq.com) or call (509)430-9996.*