

## Hungry mathematicians add up nicely for Market Bar-B-Que

C.J., *Star Tribune*, Minneapolis-St Paul, MN

Market Bar-B-Que staffers were delighted to do the math after **Greg Tang** provided an unexpected contribution to the coffers. "You have to be nice to everybody because you never know who you're talking to," said MBBQ owner **Steve Polski**. "This guy turns up and asked if we were open. I said we really weren't for 15 minutes, but we'd still be happy to take care of him."

Identifying himself as a math conventioneer, the man wanted a menu recommendation. "I said our signature item is spare ribs and he said, *That's not going to work so well for where I'm going. What sandwich would you suggest?* I told him the barbeque beef brisket is excellent. He said, *I'll take one for now and one for later.* We're talking and I say, 'Where are you from?' He said Boston. I said, 'If you're here for the math convention, I won't have to explain the tax to you.' I just have a nice rapport with this guy, and he thanks me very much for letting him come in early."

That was about 11 a.m. "At 6 o'clock, we start getting a stream of mathematicians from the convention. And we go, 'How did you hear about us?'" Polski said. Various mathematicians told Polski that a main presenter at the convention, Greg Tang, ended his talk by telling everybody to "take out their pencil and paper and then saying, *If there is one thing you do while in Minneapolis, it's go to the Market Bar-B-Que.* I start thinking, I wonder if that was the guy I let in early? I Google Greg Tang and there's a picture and it's him. He's a famous mathematician. He's written children's books [including] 'The Grapes of Math,' 'Math Potatoes,' 'Math for All Seasons.'"

Polski shot off an e-mail thanking Tang. Tang replied with a question about whether the ribs were great after being shipped via Fed Ex. Polski sent Tang a free slab. It turned out that Tang was out of town, but the math scholar's son proclaimed the ribs "great." Polski said he'll send another slab. Tang promised that when his publisher, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, gets his website up, Market Bar-B-Que will be mentioned prominently. "I would say we got several thousand dollars worth of business from Tang," Polski said.

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