Yep — you're running into a *very* common 3-2-1 ribs problem. The method is forgiving, but it can quietly dry ribs out if a couple of details are off. The good news: you can absolutely get **juicy, almost decadent ribs** on a Traeger with just a few tweaks.

Why your ribs are drying out

Even though 3-2-1 *sounds* moist-friendly, dryness usually comes from one (or more) of these:

1. **Too little liquid/fat in the wrap**
2. **Foil/butcher paper wrapped too "clean"**
3. **Overcooking during the wrapped phase**
4. **Not enough fat rendering before the wrap**
5. **Final unwrapped hour going too long or too hot**

Traegers are very dry cookers by nature — great smoke, but little humidity — so ribs need help.

The single biggest fix: Treat the wrap like a braise

Wrapping alone doesn't add moisture — **what's inside the wrap does**.

When you wrap at 3 hours, add this:

Inside the foil (foil works better than butcher paper for moisture):

- 2–3 Tbsp **butter** (cut into pats)
- 2–3 Tbsp **apple juice or cider**
- 1–2 Tbsp **honey or brown sugar**
- Optional but excellent:
  - 1 Tbsp **apple cider vinegar**
  - A drizzle of **maple syrup**

Seal tightly. This creates steam + fat = juiciness.

If you use butcher paper: it breathes. That's great for bark, but worse for moisture. For ribs, foil is usually superior.

Modify the timing slightly (Traeger-friendly version)

🔥 3–1.5–0.5 Method (instead of 3–2–1)

Why: Many ribs are *already done* before the full 2 hours wrapped.

Step-by-step:

1. **3 hours unwrapped**
    - 180–200°F
    - Spritz every 30–45 minutes with apple juice + water
2. **1.5 hours wrapped (foil + liquid)**
    - 225°F
    - Start checking tenderness at 1 hour
    - You want a probe to slide in easily, not fall apart
3. **30 minutes unwrapped**
    - 225–250°F
    - Sauce lightly
    - Just set the glaze — don't dry them

Another sneaky moisture booster: spritz earlier

During the first 3 hours:

- Apple juice + water (50/50)
- OR apple juice + ACV (3:1)

This keeps the surface from dehydrating before the wrap.

Don't wait for "fall off the bone"

That's actually **overcooked** ribs.

Perfectly moist ribs:

- Bend easily
- Meat pulls clean from the bone
- Still has structure

If they're falling apart, the moisture has already escaped.

Optional upgrade: rib mop instead of dry rub

Dry rubs alone pull moisture out.

Try:

- Rub lightly
- Then mop during hour 2–3 with:

- Apple juice
- Melted butter
- A splash of vinegar

Quick checklist for next cook

✅ Use **foil**, not butcher paper
✅ Add **butter + liquid + sugar** inside the wrap
✅ Shorten wrapped time
✅ Spritz during first phase
✅ Don’t overdo the final hour

If you want, tell me:

- Baby backs or St. Louis cut?
- What temp you’re running each phase?
- Foil or paper currently?

I can dial this in *exactly* for your ribs and Traeger model. 🍖🔥