Chef’s Log 30 August 2008
Smoked Salmon and Duroc Pork Ribs

Every story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Some have transitions, and some have parallel stories.

The real beginning of this story is the spring of 1971. I was a research slave at the Harvard Business School and Steve Bradley, 29 years old, assistant professor, was my slave master. When his wife had a surprise 30\textsuperscript{th} birthday \textit{wake} for him ... could anyone over 30 still be considered alive? ... Trautie and Steve Bradley became the \textit{King and Queen of Cool}. When she served my wife and me cherry tomatoes (wow, little tomatoes in 1971) with a curry dressing (wow, curry in 1971) her position as the Queen of Cool was, like, assured forever.

Tonight we had dinner for gourmet friends. What could I start with that would be safe and cool? Well ... of course ... heirloom cherry tomatoes ... a gift from Derek at Mainline Prime ... with curry dressing. This is nothing more than a tablespoon of Penzeys Maharaja Curry Powder stirred into a cup of heavy Greek yogurt, but it retains its magic still.

But these friends are serious cooks, enough so that I had recurring nightmares in the week leading up to the barbecue ... should I do a crown roast of pork, in which case timing becomes critical? Or could I do individual pork chops ... which always taste great but look ... so ... well ... easy ... because of course they are. I did a crown roast. I got a rack of 10 Duroc pork ribs, from Mainline Prime. (Duroc, of course, is a heritage breed, as in heavily marbled and flavorful, as in \textit{pork, the other red meat.}) I made my own Memphis rub, and let the rack sit for 24 hours. And then, finally, the time to start arrived.
I smoked the ribs for 3 hours over cold wet hickory and mesquite smoke.

The ribs looked almost good to go. They just needed some crisping at very high heat.
They sliced up nicely
But what if I could not get the timing exactly right? That called for a backup plan ... so I also prepared smoked salmon, first smoked Remy, then buried for hours in rock salt and turbinado sugar, smoked at low heat over apple wood. If the ribs turned out too cooked, or too anything else, at least we would have salmon.

Of course in the week’s nightmares sometimes these guests never even show up. I mean ... I serve beer and they drink wine. Would they even bother to show up tonight? As the night unfolded they were over an hour late ... and I thought my nightmares were coming true.

In the event they did show up, they brought fantastic curried sweet potatoes and their own wine, they drank my beer, we finished with my 88 Rieussec, and there was no need for me to panic. Derek’s pork, Penzeys spices, some great technology, and a little luck combined to get me through the evening.

And, yes, my support team for the event did their stuff. Jean’s blueberry tart and Julia’s baked macaroni and cheese casserole and chocolate chocolate chip cake were essential parts of the evening. It’s pretty amazing how much debris can be generated by 11 people making and serving and eating dinner; Jean and Julia’s cleanup efforts likewise were essential. Yeah ... I did the most hateful part of the cleanup ... dealing with the various pieces of the grill and the smoker ... but the bulk of the cleanup was Jean.

Finally, as the evening was coming to its very late close, one of my dinner guests observed that, like my aging canopy of cherry trees, we were getting a bit old. Yes, like them, we still had
some good days each year. Yes, like them, we might be covered with strange new growths, like
the lichens, moss, and ferns covering the trees. But also, like them, we seemed somehow to be
alive, and our shoots, Julia and Jenna, seemed as alive as the occasional green leaves we could
somehow find the on the obviously aging cherry trees.

But now it is necessary to start getting ready for the next round ... pulled pork and more beer.

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