Last night just felt like a free-for-all mixed grill. Jean and Julia wanted Jamison lamb chops with a touch of garlic and rosemary. I wanted a Hereford heritage dry aged New York strip steak, charred and rare, rubbed all over with a Cajun rub, smoked over mesquite. It photographed well, both early in the grilling process and later, when the Cajun blackening spice had charred nicely.
It also photographed nicely with a bottle of Gruaud Larose 1986, some wild rice, and a greek salad with heirloom Green Zebra, Black Prince, red and orange tomatoes. There were some fire flare-ups which threw off my timing, and for the first time in a long time I overcooked the meat. I would have sent it back if someone else (read, Smith & Wollensky, Morton’s) had brought me a steak cooked medium, no matter how nicely the blackening spices complemented the flavors. I’ll have to watch this the next time. The tell-tale sign was how high the grill temperature got, due to the flare-ups; I’ll know how to compensate for that the next time.
No doubt about it — this truly was a blackened steak. Only slightly over-cooked, and only slightly over-sized.

Still, leftovers represent both an opportunity and an obligation for creativity. Today’s lunch was a grilled panini-style sandwich, sort of a hybrid between a New York corned beef special and an Italian-style panini. I started with thick slabs of multigrain bread, put on paper-thin slices of leftover New York strip steak, thin slices of mozzarella, and a little bit of creamy coleslaw. I then grilled the sandwich until the panini press had toasted the bread and even created little dark streaks on the surface, and had warmed up but had not yet cooked the fillings. Some more coleslaw, some jalepeno-spiced cucumber pickles and a glass of Scarlet Fire smoked wheat beer from Victory rounded out lunch.

The Scarlet Fire is a new addition to the Victory lineup, introduced in September and initially available only at the Bar at Victory. The beer in some sense represents the combination of the wheat bite (overtones of cloves, black pepper, and lemon, with an intense banana and melon mouth-feel from the Moon Glow) with the moderate smokiness of a smoked lager (the moderate wood smoke notes Scarlet Fire make it different from most lagers in much the same way the peat smoked malts make Scotch whiskeys different from Irish whiskeys).

I think Scarlet Moon is a marvelous complement to barbecues and I regret that I have essentially emptied the growler I brought home last week.

ekc