Once again, today’s exercise is more about the photography than about the food. I bought veal ribs, beautifully trimmed and wrapped by Main Line Prime. This is a pretty straightforward shot.

The next shot is a single double-cut veal chop, with a dry Cajun rub, shot for maximum depth of field and maximum clarity. Michael Zorn would be pleased with the clear visibility of each grain of paprika and each flake of carefully ground bay leaf.

The next two shots are of the ribs slowly smoking. My rib has the Cajun rub. The ribs for Jean and Julia are lightly rubbed with olive oil, then covered with garlic and rosemary. Again, these were shot for maximum depth of field, with ISO of 400 for clarity and lack of grain, f-stop of 16 for depth of field, and an external flash to provide sufficient power and light.
The next shot is yet another shot of smoking ribs. The first two are as I always shoot them, with maximum depth of field. Going for maximum depth of field is an easy default — no artistic judgment is required. The final shot of the grouping is an attempt to make an artistic decision ... not that there is much art required in the depiction of burning meat. Here I decided to reduce the depth of field and focus on my chop, giving it a dominant position and allowing the other chops to fade into a deferential blur. I’m not sure why I did this, other than to see if I could.
The next two shots are of the table. I was continuing to experimenting with depth of field. One of the photos is taken with the same ISO and the same flash settings as before, but with an f-stop of 4.5 for very limited depth of field. The second is taken with an f-stop of 16 for maximum depth of field.
A careful examination of the second photograph indicates that no one else at the table has bothered to take any food yet. My dinner companions have enough patience with me to allow me to set up and photograph my own plate without staging an at-table mutiny, but they are quite insistent about refusing to allow their food to be served and to chill while I am setting up my shots. Yes, their plates were as attractive as mine. No, their food was not cold by the time they sat down to start eating. But for them it was merely dining, while for me it was a clumsy attempt at artistic self-validation.

Julia did a marvelous job preparing a stew of sweet potatoes, onions, spinach, and curry. I goosed my portion with a significant shot of crushed hot red peppers and then mixed it with brown basmati rice. Jean also prepared lightly caramelized sautéed Brussels sprouts with garlic and balsamic vinegar, which were a big hit but do not appear in the photos.
The final shots include the obligatory photograph of debris, as the double cut chop proved, once again, to be slightly larger than I wanted to eat at a single sitting, and a shot of dessert. We made a simple biscuit, covered with ground nuts and melted chocolate. We forgot about the biscuits during the photo shoots, however, and the result was a highly unusual dish of chocolate-covered charcoal. If we try this particular dessert again we will make sure we use some sort of timer!

I’m happy enough with the veal and the rubs, and certainly the sweet potato spinach curry and the Brussels sprouts were perfect. I’m wondering if I want even less depth of field on some of the shots, and whether I should try using a close-up with a moderate telephoto zoom rather than a close-up with a wide angle to get minimal depth of field. Time to check in with Michael Zorn again.

ekc