Chef’s Log 13 February 2009
Cajun-Blackened Rib Steaks

This would be getting tedious except that my photography coach had some interesting comments at the end. Yes, I think we are finally mastering the art of shooting dead meat. It stays in one place. Lightening and shutter speed are pretty predictable. Depth of field is pretty straightforward if you no what effect you want ... and if you don’t you just take four or five shots with auto-bracket and you end up looking like an artist. Below we have a Hereford rib steak, cut extra thick on a single bone, choice rather than prime. Especially tasty, and a surprisingly good bang for the buck. From Derek’s Main Line Prime, of course. One shot plain, the other with a Cajun rub.
And then we have two more thoroughly predictable shots ... one of the Cajun rubbed rib starting to smoke and the other of my rib steak and Jean’s, just finishing up. As usual, Jean prepares her with garlic, but without a serious slam of the nasties that I find so delightful.

And then, of course, there’s dinner. Steak fries with sweet potatoes, steamed spinach, and a bottle of a marvelous Mikkeller Belgian-style ale from Denmark. Why would anyone buy Mikkeller? Why pay import prices for a brewery that does not even have its own style? One case is Danish interpretation of an American stout, the next is a Danish interpretation of a Belgian sour, and the next is their interpretation of a Belgian quad. I guess I buy them because they’re all pretty good and they all make me smile.
My photography coach, Mike Zorn, says that shooting food is getting to be too easy. It sits there until you are ready to shoot. You can control lighting and exposure. You can shoot again and again until you like the results. Shooting food is pretty limiting. It’s time to take shots of people, in groups, moving, without do-overs. So I practiced at Wharton Follies.
I am the unofficial official photographer for Wharton Follies, the annual MBA play. The School has a professional official photographer, but the School does not allow him to share his shots with the cast. He’s a great guy, and over the years he has coached me so that my stuff is ok. It’s actually pretty tough to get the lighting right when dancers are moving quickly, the ambient spots create enough light to blur a slow exposure, and it’s hard to get flash exposure right from a distance. Aperture for depth of field, exposure time for crispness of rapidly moving subjects, ISO speed, and flash settings all interact. The results are now acceptable. Mike Zorn thinks we can do better, and we will.

The steaks are more cooperative. But as Mike points out, no one has ever put a tight little red dress on a steak. Or tried to photograph it while it danced.

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