Oh no.

My credit score was fine. Getting a car loan was no problem.

But my docs are not pleased with my cholesterol numbers.

Yes, the good cholesterol number is great. The sort of number you only see in serious beer guys, serious athletes, or, better yet, serious beer guys who don’t drink until they finish their nightly workout. Every night. So the good-to-bad cholesterol ratio is wonderful. Still, the total cholesterol “score” has crept up 70 points since I started this online barbecue blog and is inching inexorably upwards. Time to intervene.

But how? What does a serious barbecuer do when his doc says, “Lose the baby backs. Lose the rib eyes. It’s time for you to stop barbecuing for a while!”? What do you do, when you have already tried the moderation thing (Not Quite the Mayo Clinic Diet), with only mixed success?

Well, you can visit other barbecuers for a couple of nights. Let them barbecue, and you can eat their baby backs and their rib eyes. We did that. My brother does great work around a smoker or a grill, and he has even better equipment than I have. His grill is huge, and he is happy searing rib eye for Korean bulkogi, slow smoking baby back ribs, and grilling chicken.

Eventually, though, it’s time for a sustainable solution.

And that means … sigh … chicken. The only thing on my brother’s grill that passes the screen from my docs. I have to learn to make chicken. I have to learn to eat chicken.
If I have to make chicken I need the most interesting recipe I can find, and I cribbed another idea from Steve Raichlen, Beer Can Chicken. I tried it two ways. The first chicken used the aromatic and savory rub I cribbed from Di Shui Dong, primarily based on cumin, coriander, cinnamon, ginger, garlic, and a barely discernible hit of heat from Tien Tsin red peppers. This chicken was rubbed inside and out, literally inside and out. Raichlen has this trick for completely separating the chicken from its skin, and then sliding a couple of teaspoons of rub inside between the meat and the skin. This really is sort of gross to contemplate, and would probably give a vegetarian nightmares. This first chicken was balanced atop a stainless steel frame, which had a stainless steel infuser inside the stiff wire infrastructure.

The second chicken used a fiery Cajun rub. And it had no fancy stainless steel infrastructure. The chicken is simply balanced “sitting” on a can of beer. I know the choice of beer does not really matter … it’s mostly just for providing steam and keeping the chicken moist. But I used the most exotic can of beer I could find, Belle-Vue Kriek. (Sorry … the only picture I can find online is of a bottle, not a can. And the can … after being baked inside a chicken for an hour and half … probably does no longer makes what you, dear reader, would consider an attractive photograph.)

I used apple wood for the smoke.

The chickens browned up nicely. At one point, strangely, they reminded me of Baby Brent in Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs, after he had been eaten by a giant roasted chicken and converted into Chicken Brent.
This takes a lot longer than grilling a rib eye. Although there is something gratifying about having your entire hand disappear between the chicken and its skin — maybe that’s why I thought of Chicken Brent — it’s a lot more work than a rib eye. And I can’t yet say I enjoy it as much as a good steak.

I hope my docs do.

I was going to have them over for grilled steaks later this summer. I don’t want to appear to be ignoring their advice.

The docs are going to get chicken.

Still, first indications are that the recipe worked extraordinarily well. The dry high heat of the grill crisped the skin, especially because it was separated from the carcass body of the chicken — I hate to use the word carcass for anything I have been so physically intimate with as I was with those chickens. The steam from the beer, released constantly into the carcass body of the chicken, kept the meat moist. The spicy rubs ... well ... spiced them up. The wood smoke, the mild taste of chicken, and the heat of the spicy rubs interacted wonderfully.

I think the docs will be adequately pleased with the chicken. And even more pleased that I am following their instructions.

ekc