Chef’s Log 2 October 2011

With Chicken Barbecue, It’s All About the Photography!

Is it clear that I really don’t like chicken? Yes, my docs have suggested that chicken is better than gobbling 18 ounce Cajun-blackened rib eye steaks. But chicken has the taste and texture of, well, chicken. Yes, the beer-can chicken approach can fix the texture. And applying sufficient quantities of rub, and sufficiently spicy rub, can provide some taste. It is, still, only chicken. And yet it photographs so well!

Hiding the flavor of chicken is important to me. These birds are obviously well-rubbed on the outside with a dry rub. Several tablespoons of the rub has also carefully been inserted between the skin and the body of the bird. Since I discovered that even six habaneros provides more heat than Jean can tolerate, and she is not willing to share my Jamaican Jerk chicken, another eight habaneros and a couple of especially nasty piquins could do no harm. An hour or more of oak smoke, a fist full of habaneros, and who can tell what kind of bird this was!

Still, it is only chicken. Therein, quite literally, lies the rub. And there is always the chance that I will recognize it as chicken. As long as the grill is hot, the smoke is thick, and the Jerk rub is fiery, why not prepare a back-up? In case the chicken is not sufficiently disguised, I grilled a couple of thick cut bone-in pork chops. Still the other white meat, still not a rib eye steak, but a safe compromise just in case. (It’s hard to over-stress the “safe” part. The slow, lengthy process of separating the bird and the skin is principally to allow you to insert the rub all over the body. As importantly, when combined with vertical roasting, it allows virtually all of the fat to collect in the drip pans.)
Yes, with chicken it is about the spices, and above all, about the photography.

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