We had company for dinner last night. Given their food allergies and dietary preferences, and given what we had and had not served them before, it was time for chicken. The plan was, yes, stand-up beer can chicken, one extra fiery Cajun and the other simply prepared with garlic, salt, and fresh ground black pepper.

First surprise — it started to snow. Quite heavily, actually, enough to encourage the wild life to see if we could offer them food or shelter. Since the idea of a tame feral fox seemed a bit implausible, we declined, and we allowed the poor beasties to fend for themselves while we figured out how best to feed our guests.

Second surprise — on their beer-can stands, the birds were too tall to fit in the kitchen oven.

So it was time for a backup plan. Smoke the birds in the Bradley over apple wood.
This makes sense because the Bradley is in a covered breeze way, out of the snow. Of course the Bradley only gets up to about 220°. The birds developed a great smoky flavor, and the meat was visibly smoked, but the skin never crisps and the fat never quite drips off. What to do? Would waiting another hour help? Probably … except … 

Third surprise — the power went out. We do have a backup generator, which covers all the essentials like heating, cooling, sump pumps for bailing the basement during a storm, and all of our computers and internet gear. But we never convinced the electrician that the electric smoker was an essential piece of equipment during a blizzard. Now what do we do? Time for Plan C, the original plan … use the grill. Knock off the snow … clear a path … and finish over high heat.

Dinner worked. A little late, and not all of our guests made it. But it worked. Fox photo and plum tarte tatin provided by Jean, as well as essential side dishes and post-dinner clean-up, while I wrestled with a homework assignment I was about to give my undergraduates.

ekc