

## Smoked Chicken

We raised chickens for their eggs when I was a boy. The difference between fresh-laid eggs and store-bought eggs is huge. Yard eggs are richer in flavor, and when you beat them, they even seem thicker in texture. We would buy chicken at the market to eat, rather than slaughter our laying hens. My mother used to make what we called “barbecue chicken” in the oven. It was basically baked chicken with commercial barbecue sauce. I don’t want to knock it. I enjoyed that baked chicken, but I wouldn’t call it barbecue. It wasn’t until later, when we added chicken to the menu at the family restaurant that I got into true smoked chicken. The oven and the pit are very different, obviously. When you taste this chicken, you’ll have a hard time going back to your oven.

2 whole chickens (3 to 4 pounds each), spatchcocked and halved through the breastplate (a total of 4 halves)  
3 tablespoons Rib Rub  
4 cups Rodney’s Sauce

Fire up your grill to between 225°F and 250°F.

Sprinkle the chickens on all sides with the rib rub. Place the chicken onto the hot grill, bone-side down. Close and cook until the bone sides are nicely browned, about 1 hour and 30 minutes, being careful to maintain a steady grilling temperature between 225°F and 250°F.

Mop the skin side with the sauce, then flip the chickens and mop the bone side with sauce as well. Close and cook until the thickest part of the thigh reaches 165°F, about 1 hour.

Mop the chickens once more. Take them off the grill and allow them to rest for 5 minutes before serving.

## **Rib Rub**

Makes 2 cups

½ cup Diamond Crystal kosher salt  
¼ cup Jesus's Tears (aka MSG)  
¼ cup freshly ground black pepper  
¼ cup paprika  
¼ cup chili powder  
¼ cup packed light brown sugar  
2 tablespoons garlic powder  
2 tablespoons onion powder  
1 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Mix all of the ingredients and place them in an airtight container. Cover and store in a cool dry place until ready to use.

## **Rodney's Sauce**

Makes 1 Gallon

1 gallon distilled white vinegar  
1 lemon, thinly sliced  
½ cup ground black pepper  
⅓ cup cayenne pepper  
¼ tablespoons red pepper flakes  
2 cups sugar

In a small stockpot, warm the vinegar over medium-high heat. After about 5 minutes, when the vinegar reaches 150°F on an instant-read thermometer, just before it starts to simmer, add the lemon slices and continue to cook until the lemon peels begin to soften and wilt, about 10 minutes more.

Whisk in the black pepper, cayenne, pepper flakes, and sugar. Continue to cook over medium-high heat until the sugar is completely dissolved and the sauce reaches 190°F, about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and allow to completely cool before using. Once the lemon is removed, the sauce can be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 8 weeks.

