

In This Issue: 101 Great Tasting Recipes

Southern Living®

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Louisville's Best Barbecue

Mark Erwin knew that if he wanted to open a barbecue restaurant in Louisville, he'd better have the sauce.

So he turned his home kitchen into a barbecue laboratory, mixing, mingling, stirring, and simmering for more than a month. The result was a tangy mixture of red tomatoes, black pepper, and yellow turmeric—a sauce that any self-respecting slab of ribs would be proud to wear.

With homemade sauce in hand, Mark opened his restaurant in 1988. Pretty soon barbecue enthusiasts from across Kentucky were following the smoke signals to Mark's Feed Store in Middletown, a Louisville suburb.

Now after nine years and three more Feed Stores, Mark's sauce still has lips smacking and tongues wagging. His eateries have been voted Louisville's best barbecue places for three years in a row. After a recent visit to the Bardstown Road location, a friend and I jumped on the bandwagon.

Like the other Feed Stores, the Bardstown branch has a comfortable country-come-to-town atmosphere. Antique signs and posters adorn the walls. Tables topped with red-checked cloths groan underneath

platters of pulled pork and plates of succulent beef. Rolls of paper towels and bottles of sauce (both tomato- and mustard-based varieties) stand ready.

Before getting to the meaty main course, we sampled an order of Honeywings. Distant cousins of buffalo wings, the chicken wonders are coated with a fiery-sweet mixture of honey and cayenne pepper, and deep-fried to a crispy tenderness. Then we tried the thinly sliced onion straws and fried sweet corn on the cob, two other Feed Store delicacies.

Finishing the ample appetizers, we turned to our barbecued pork dinners (served like all the restaurants' entrées, in aluminum baking pans). The delicately smoked, carefully pulled meat shimmered with a thin coating of Mark's tasty concoction. A few moments (and a roll of paper towels) later, the piles of pork and a bottle of sauce had all but disappeared.

Our grateful sighs greeted the waitress as she brought a new bottle. With guilty smiles we dashed a little sauce over the remaining bits of barbecue.

Anyway, we reasoned, Mark could always make more. *James T. Black*



PHOTOGRAPH: MEG MCKINNEY SIMLE

In Louisville, a city that takes its barbecue seriously, Mark's Feed Store consistently ranks as the best in town.

Mark's Feed Store: 1514 Bardstown Road; (502) 458-1570.
Hours: 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-11 p.m.
Friday-Saturday. Prices: sandwiches \$3.49, dinners \$6-\$12.

More Feed Stores: Other area locations are in Middletown, 11422 Shelbyville Road, (502) 244-0140; in Valley Station, 10316 Dixie Highway, (502) 933-7707; and in Clarksville, Indiana (just across the river), 513 East State 131, (812) 285-1998. Take the whole family: Kids eat free on Tuesday when accompanied by an adult.