

# SAVEUR

## FARE

*Specialties and Surprises from the World of Food, plus Wines from the Saveur Cellar and Agenda*

### NOW EAR THIS

*They fried and fried to find the perfect cob*

**I**S IT REALLY *fried* corn?" I ask the waitress at Mark's Feed Store, a barbecue joint in Louisville, Kentucky, that actually is a converted old feed store. I know boiled, grilled, and roasted corn, but fried? "Sure is," answers the waitress, waiting with pencil to pad. I take the plunge, and thus begins an addiction.

At Mark's, fried corn is served whole on the cob, piping hot, with yellow kernels lacquered gold, brown, and almost black. One bite releases a heavenly combination of sweetness, chewiness, and nuttiness. Tom Brown, director of operations for Mark's (there are four outposts in Louisville, plus two others elsewhere in Kentucky), agrees fried corn is unusual. "Mark Erwin, the owner, came across fried corn at small barbecue shacks real deep in the country," Brown says. "It's a 'from the hills' kind of thing."

Not just any corn will fry up nicely, it turns out, and to recreate the specialty, Erwin contacted all the corn producers he knew, both locally and nationally. "We must have tasted at least 20 different ears of corn until we found this

particular ear," says Brown. And not all the taste testing was pleasant. "You bite into one, and it's just greasy and nasty; another one turned to glue in the fryer and just stuck to your mouth; another one just turned to mush." Ultimately, a bona fide winner emerged. "The key is the high sugar content," says Brown. "We use really sweet corn." He buys some 8,400 shucked ears every week—but will not divulge the exact type of corn or even its source. "Where we get it from is a trade secret," he says, "and we would hate for other people to get a hold of it."

The process for cooking the corn couldn't be any simpler, though. Each ear is dropped into a deep fryer for about three and a half minutes, then removed and delivered hot and deliciously sweet to the table. "Nobody else does this," says Brown. I can't argue with the man; I'm too busy chewing. (For information on Mark's Feed Stores, see *THE PANTRY*, page 97.)—BARBARA FREDA



#### M E T H O D

### Fried Corn

MARK'S doesn't tell which corn variety it uses, but we found that supersweet corn—with its high sugar content—fries up best. Pour vegetable oil into a large pot to a depth of 2" and heat over medium-high heat until the temperature reaches 365° on a candy thermometer. Shuck 8 ears supersweet corn and fry, several ears at a time, until most of the kernels are deep golden, 3—4 minutes per batch. Drain corn on paper towels and season to taste with salt, if you like. Serves 4—8.