

Lifestyles

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J Walking A City Girl Goes Country

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Two gigantic ferris wheels, candy apples, farm animals, laughter... all are the sights, smells, and sounds of the North Carolina State Fair.

The Fair, which is held in Raleigh every fall, celebrated 150 years with ten days of animals, food, rides, concerts, and fun. On Sunday, October 26, I was one of the thousands of fair-goers to walk through the gates on closing night, and my first experience there will always be memorable.

After 21 years on this earth, I only recently ventured outside the confines of urban sprawl. Due to my sheltered existence, I have been exposed to rabbits, cows, pigs, sheep, goats, and various birds of a feather on only a few and rare occasions. In the Jim Graham Exposition Building at the State Fair, my experience with farm animals multiplied exponentially. Cows of all colors, shapes, and sizes sat in their hay-filled stalls. When I approached them, they looked up at me with big, black eyes and mooed softly.

I marveled at the milking machines that gleaned the milk from the Holsteins. "Udderly" fascinating!

At the pig show, I discovered that

"pork" is certainly an appropriate moniker. A sow who looked no lighter than 500 pounds of pink skin, snout, and curly tail suckled her youngsters in a cage. Mother and all her oinking children looked quite content.

I was also amazed at the different varieties of rabbits, all of whom reminded me of the Cadbury Bunny. Too bad they didn't lay any caramel-filled, chocolate Easter eggs.

I was most astonished, however, at the chickens.

White ones, black ones, yellow ones, brown ones...all feathery and some even *furry*! I was surprised to learn that a Leghorn (as in the Looney Tune character Foghorn Leghorn) is an actual species of chicken. I say, I say, those chickens, I say, do look like the cartoon, son.

As I pondered over the black rooster who was crowned by a splendid array of plumes, I watched as one of the proud exhibitors came to gather his blue-ribbon brood. A man clothed in a plaid shirt grabbed the chicken around the legs, pulled it out of the cage, and

carried it upside-down to whatever new enclosure awaited it for the trip home.

"Why does he carry the bird that way?" I thought. My companion in the

livestock barn must have read my mind. "They might flap their wings, but they aren't going anywhere," he said. Logical enough, I guess.

The opportunity to hold baby

chicks and ducks with fluffy down and soft quacks was a rewarding experience as well, but now that I have been up close and personal with these precious fowl, I cannot

pass a Kentucky Fried Chicken without feeling a lump in my throat and a knot in my stomach.

Later in the evening I had the pleasure of attending my first country music concert given by Brad Paisley. I am a relatively new convert to the genre, so I was excited to hear the tell-tale twang of the banjo in person. Dorton Arena filled up with hundreds of laughing fans. Some donned cowboy hats for the occasion. Many were armed with lighters to wave during Brad's ballads. Some even carried a menagerie of animals that had been won at the "Fool the

Guesser" booths. The bulldogs with silver top hats and the great white sharks were so gigantic that they may have required their own tickets and seating assignments.

The lights dimmed in the house, and the stage glowed red. The crowd chanted "We Want Brad! We Want Brad!" When Brad himself entered stage right, the chants turned to screams of adoration and anticipation. He was decked out in tight blue jeans, a black shirt, and his trademark white cowboy hat that made the females young and old swoon. With his band of fiddle players, guitarists, and a rip-roaring drummer, he sang both old and new favorites such as "Wrapped Around," "Celebrity," and "I'm Gonna Miss Her," his crowd-pleasing ode to fishing.

Being raised in the concrete jungle of Fayetteville, NC, I really had no idea what to expect from the exotic flavors produced by the barnyards, the aroma of barbeque, and the tap of cowboy boots to the beat of a Nashville tune.

Now I am proud to say that my new-found country roots run deep. I cannot wait to come face to face with another pygmy goat, listen to the soft "baa" of another sheep, and crank up Brad

Paisley and other country music gems on my stereo system.

But most of all, I cannot wait to attend the North Carolina State Fair next year!



photo by Jonelle Kimbrough

Oink! A sow feeds her piglets at the Livestock Exposition



photo by Russ Thompson

I was honored to hold this baby chick at the North Carolina State Fair's Poultry Show.



photo by Jonelle Kimbrough

Country music star Brad Paisley and his band rock Dorton Arena and thrill the sold-out crowd.