

# GRITS — Girl raised in the South ... begrudgingly

I applied to Carolina only because my mom made me. I didn't want to go here — in fact, I didn't want to go to school anywhere in the South.

It was all about the Northeast for me — where there are winters, big cities and most important, no sweet tea or grits.

I grew up in the South (technically), but Virginia Beach is more of a beach than South, and stints in California and Washington, D.C., always have kept me from thinking of myself as a Southerner.

My mom was a decades-long UNC basketball fan, though, and she knew that as a student interested in journalism, it didn't make any sense for me not to apply.

Well, I got in, and as you can see — here I am.

It turned out that everything I hated about the South and about UNC eventually became the most endearing.

Though I still hate sweet tea, I'm all about grits (with a lot of salt), and you can't help but love peach cobbler.

Though I used to give my mom flak for it, I too now get mad at



**RACHEL ULLRICH**  
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anyone who calls a "cook out" a "barbecue" — unless there's pulled pork, it ain't a BBQ.

And the Southern charm that seems to radiate from the UNC campus can't help but make you smile.

Whether it's the drawing accents or the Croakies holding Oakley sunglasses behind someone's neck — wait. No. I'm not OK with that aspect of Southern-ification.

So, the drawing accents or the tendency for using terms of endearment to address total strangers are enough to make the Southerner in all of us come out.

So when I join in our alma mater during football games, I leave out the "Tar Heel born" part. I wasn't born a Tar Heel. But I'll sing the

"bred" line louder than anyone.

Carolina will do that to you. I hear myself talking to my friends at home about coming back to "Care'liina" and laugh as I think about the days I said "yous guys."

A friend from Canada never lets me forget the fact that not only do I say "y'all" in conversations, I type it in e-mails.

I find myself in Virginia Beach during vacations talking about coming "home" — to Chapel Hill.

And when I think about how excited I get to come back to Carolina after four days at home, I can appreciate how much it must mean to someone coming back after a few years away.

The chance to come to Carolina is a thrilling prospect for all — just ask the tourists you always can find in the quads when they ask you to take their pictures in front of Wilson Library.

But the chance to come back as an alumna — that's what makes these four years worth it.

That, and the basketball tickets.

Contact Rachel Ullrich at [rullrich@email.unc.edu](mailto:rullrich@email.unc.edu).



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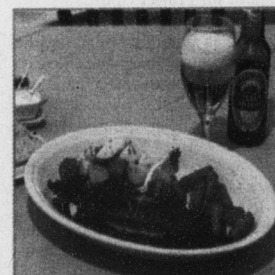
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