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characters as fun to watch as the ones in costume.

People of all ages and from all walks of life wander through the Renaissance fantasy land. The festival is geared to an older crowd, but little boys ogle at the wenches along side their fathers, and wandering tykes lend innocence to the free-for-all atmosphere.

You may begin to question the credibility of your eyesight, but your ears quickly confirm your visual perceptions. The tightrope walker is whistling Dixie, and the scantily-clad women are vocally soliciting your business.

They all speak with thick drawing Old English accents, addressing you, naturally, as "m'lord" or "m'lady." The women selling pastries beckon you to "nibble on m'muffins" and the men with the swords are hurling insults at each other.

They'll insult you, too, if you give them half a chance. Just mention that you're an Aggie and you'll find yourself the victim of Aggie jokes and jests — Renaissance style.

"My sword is long and drawn out," Sir Pinoch warns the villian he is dueling.

The villian replies with a wicked gleam in his eye, "Kind of like an Aggie football game."

The villian is rewarded with a hiss from the crowd, to which Sir Pinoch responds, "It sounds like we have some Aggies in the audience."

The A&M crowd plays right into the actor's hands, letting go with a resounding "Whoop!"

"OK ... then ... we'll ... talk ... slower ...," the duo chimes in unison.

And after the actors have insulted your alma mater, it's likely they'll take a stab at your honor as well.

If you're of the gentler sex, the maidens selling flowered garlands will accost you, time and time again, insisting that it is disgraceful to wander in public with a naked head. If you are ungrateful enough not to heed their advice, it is likely you will

find yourself the subject of public scorn — or amusement, at any rate.

"We have cheap women here," one peasant woman announces at the top of her voice after you've refused her garlands. "Freeee women, freeee women, freeee women right here."

The men, too, are the subject of public scrutiny, as they find themselves in the hands of an affectionate wench. For the right price one of these wandering women will smother an unsuspecting lad in bright red kisses and friendly — *very friendly* — embraces.

You may find yourself a little bemused by the risqué revelry, but don't worry, it won't be long before you're completely caught up in the Renaissance spirit (or *sprits*, as the case may be).

As you gradually take in the sights and sounds, your olfactory senses are assaulted by a delicious aroma that fills the already pine-scented air, luring you into irrational indulgence.

Everywhere you walk throughout the enchanted kingdom, the scent of culinary treats surrounds you, teasing you with promises of palatable pleasures.

Once you realize that your taste buds must be appeased — and it won't take long for the old taste buds to tell you that they *must* be appeased — you will find yourself in somewhat of a pickle (pun intended).

You have oodles of foods to choose from, ranging from the exotic to the ordinary. Succulent turkey legs and tender steak-on-a-stick are traditional Renaissance favorites.

But you'll also discover a variety of cultural cuisines, including egg rolls, sausage-on-a-stick, and fajitas (Renaissance style, of course). You'll be tempted by le quiche pie, croissant sandwiches, skewered shrimp, and marinated shishkabobs. The list goes on, and you've only considered the entrees.

To accompany your main

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Face-painting is a popular pastime at the Renaissance Festival. For a few pounds, a friendly face painter can spruce up your looks with a variety of designs.

