



Eleven-year Renaissance Festival employee Tamera Norgaard paints a rose on 5-year-old Houston resident Courtney Campbell's cheek.

# Texas Renaissance Festival

## Celebration offers fun for all who attend

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Of The Battalion Staff

**H**ear ye noblewomen and noblemen! It's time to eat, drink and be merry as the 15th annual Texas Renaissance Festival beckons you to leave the 20th century behind.

Hear the screams of an audience as two jousting knights race toward each other in a deadly battle. Feel your heart skip a beat as a chain-dragging, nine-foot ogre arranges his bony fingers around someone else's neck. Breathe a sigh of relief as a lascivious wench flings herself on another man until she is paid to unwrap herself.

Regardless of what you already know about the Renaissance, you can learn even more by traveling back in time to this year's Renaissance Festival.

"I learned all about the Renaissance era at A&M," said Wendy Hendricks, a 1989 A&M graduate from Beaumont. "It's neat to see what it was really like back in the 16th century."

Indeed, 'tis very easy to imagine you've stepped back 400 years as you listen to the chants of madrigal singers, eat your way through a pheasant shish kebab and watch jugglers throw flaming batons.

The only things out of place at the Renaissance Festival are the bathrooms (or "privies"), which are definitely up to par with the 20th century.

And it's a good thing they are. The Renaissance Festival has drawn crowds up to 250,000 in its 15 years of existence and it looks as though the crowds might break that record this year.

So do you care to alleviate those weekend blahs? There are about 50 different performances or demonstrations that go on each day at the Festival, many of which repeat several times throughout the celebrations.

The two most suspenseful acts are "The Flaming Idiots" and "The Juggling Schlamazels." Although it's a toss-up as to which juggling act makes your palms sweat the most, the "Juggling Schlamazels," two 16-year-olds from Houston's Bellaire High School, win the novice prize hands down.

When the suspense gets to be too much, wander on over to such comedy acts as "The Beggars of Meart," "Don Juan and Miguel" or the "Green Ogre." However, be ye warned! The acts are not always family oriented.

Can't laugh anymore? Take flight with "Sir" John Karger, the Royal Falconer, and his birds of prey show, or watch Leonardo da Vinci repaint "The Last Supper."

"Lady" Carol Shannon and her "Intriguing Belly Dancers" show a lot of navel again this year. Or you can go observe one of the many demonstrations of the Gutenberg press, blacksmiths or glassblowers.

There's also an incognito A&M graduate parading around — the king of the Festival himself — King Henry VIII. However, Henry, like the other participants in the festival, believes he's back in the 16th century, so straight answers are about as easy to find as an empty bench in the shade.

If eating is a little more down your alley, you've come to a timeless eating heaven.



Mark Mitchell, King Henry VIII (Philip Hafer) and Diane Lynn sing a hearty tune while wearing Renaissance-era costumes.

"The food is definitely the best part of the Festival," said Tom Lindsay, a speech communications senior from Kingwood.

With the plethora of foods being offered, it's easy to see how a patron could spend all day eating.

Try the Incredible Edible Toad Stools (fried mushrooms), the Fyne Swine (roasted pork on a stick), Dragon Eggs (Egg Rolls), Seymour's Sceptre (chocolate and nut-covered vanilla ice cream) and down it with Lady Lynn's Luscious Libations (coconut shells filled with piña colodas, daiquiris or margaritas).

The apparent favorite every year is the Feast of Fowl, or charbroiled turkey leg. So many of these gargantuan drumsticks are consumed that the Festival's cooks must order them a year in advance.

Anyone worried that there are only 87 shopping days until Christmas?

There are over 200 different shops filled with Cockney-accented retailers to remind you of this fact.

The shops encompass an incredible array of goods including jewelry, clothing, musical instruments, leather, woodcrafts, stained glass, potpourri, clocks, candles, hats, knives . . . the wares go on and on.

A few of the more Renaissance-style goods are the flowered hair wreaths (running from \$8-\$20), magical crystals and coats of arms. Face and body painting booths and elaborate hair-braiding shops also abound.

For \$10 you can buy a more intangible good. Tarot card, crystal ball, numerology, palm, and "aura" readings last for 15 minutes on the gypsy side of town.

If you'd like to work off a little stress from the first round of exams, the Festival offers several forms of physical fun.

The stocks are a great place to retaliate against your roommate for monopolizing the phone. Once a prisoner in the stocks, no one goes *anywhere* until someone pays to get them out. A word of warning, however: Captives tend to let a lot of secrets fly at this point.

Take, for instance, 12-year-old Amanda Adams, who was locked up by her gleeful 15-year-old sister.

"If you don't let me out now," Adams threatened, "I'll tell mom about every single boy you've had in the house!"

She was walking free in 30 seconds. Other forms of fun are the "King of the Log" pillow fights, the Mud Pit, the Knife and Axe throws, and the "Drench a Wench."

Or if you'd prefer to watch other people put their lives in danger, go watch the chariot races or jousting at the new Jousting Encampment.

"The jousting isn't an act," said Joyce Floyd, craft coordinator for the Renaissance Festival. "It's extremely dangerous — they flat joust."

If you'd like to catch all the sights, sounds and color of the 16th century, the Renaissance Festival is open on weekends through November 12th. It is located 50 miles north of Houston, between Plantersville and Magnolia on Highway 1774. Tickets are ordinarily \$12.95 per adult, but being a lucky A&M student, you can pick them up at the Rudder Box Office for only \$10.95.

The Renaissance Festival is worth the 400-year wait.



Above: Full-time artist Dave Sheppard paints his version of Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper," which Sheppard began months ago. Sheppard expects to finish the full-scale replica, which varies slightly in width from the original, in three years.



In a jewelry booth called the "Wire Wizard," mannequin heads display the brass and nickel-plated headbands designed by Ken Carns.

