

NORTH CAROLINA

wine

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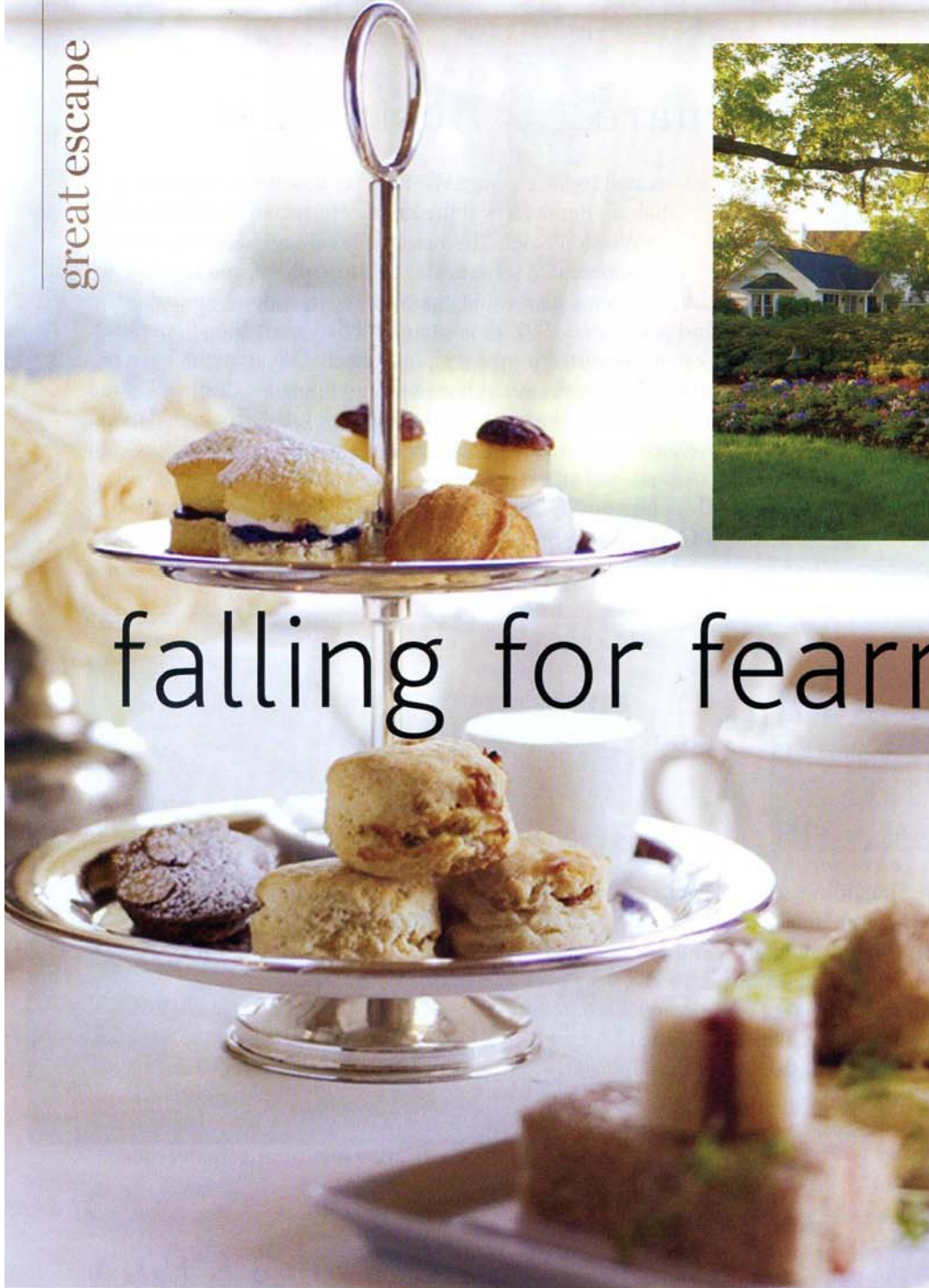
MAY/JUNE 2010

summer soirée

local wine & cheese
steal the show
at patio parties



plus:
top women winemakers
a fearrington getaway



falling for fearrington

A Triangle-area haven offers the perfect place for a girly getaway
BY LAUREN EBERLE

planning the recreation and relaxation of our next two days, Mom and I admit we feel a million miles from our everyday hectic lives.

It's this giddy sense of possibility that makes Fearrington one of the state's best destinations for a vacation with your leading ladies — from childhood best friends reliving the good ole' days to mothers and daughters making new family memories.

This was the dream of developer R.B. Fitch who, along with wife Jenny, purchased the Fearrington family farm — a fixture of the Chapel Hill-Pittsboro area since the 18th century. The couple decided to create a charming village — much like those they adored on their travels to Europe — that would easily integrate the beloved buildings, barn, and silo of the historic dairy farm.

The result was Fearrington Village, which surrounds The Fearrington House Country Inn and Restaurant, a 35-room Relais & Chateaux property (the only one of its rank in the state) and the only Green Certified AAA Five Diamond restaurant in the country.

The inn is both elegant and approachable. The pampering starts early, with

TOP RIGHT: Jenny Fitch, a passionate gourmand, learned basic cooking skills from her mother. Starting in the 1970s, Jenny joined a weekly cooking group, began attending culinary schools across the globe, and dined at some of Europe's top restaurants. In 1980 she opened The Fearrington House Restaurant, where she served as the first cook. **ABOVE:** Jenny inspired many of Fearrington's delightful details still carried on today, such as Afternoon Tea, a true treat for travelers. General Manager Theresa Chiettini has honed in on these Relais & Chateaux priorities, ensuring that Fearrington remains an indulgent destination for decades to come.

“We're here!” Mom says, setting her travel bag on the nightstand. Then, in one fluid motion, she turns, grins, throws up her hands, and finishes, “I'm so excited.”

We give each other a squeeze, and then pop open the chilled bubbly, toasting this English countryside retreat set on 1,400 acres of rolling green pastures.

In truth, Fearrington Village is an easy-to-reach destination just a highway hop, skip, and jump from any North Carolina town. But as we sit in our spacious suite,

amenities like freshly cut flowers, sumptuous robes and linens, handmade truffles, and some of the finest bath products we've ever tried. After settling into our room, Mom and I decide to explore the famed Fearington gardens. An easy stroll through the sunroom takes us outside to Jenny's beloved White Garden, which boasts a blanket of creamy-toned blooms, as well as herb and vegetable gardens responsible for much of the restaurant's fresh produce.

Afternoon tea begins at 4 p.m. at the restaurant, a tradition R.B. and Jenny began in 1987 in honor of the many teatimes they enjoyed on their travels. Weather permitting, there's perhaps no place nicer than the patio overlooking the Knot Garden. Sheltered by a ceiling of blossoming wisteria, our conversation turns to laughter, and cares drift away.

We ask the server to "surprise us," and he returns with a delightful pot of rooibos — a South African tea that's becoming

a favorite in America — as well as trays of thin sandwiches and pastries. Scones spread with cassis-and-Pinot Noir jam are an instant favorite, as are the savory red onion marmalade and white Cheddar sandwiches.

We linger a bit longer in the afternoon sun before venturing out to explore the village shops. Much like a stand-alone city, Fearington bustles with shoppers, guests, and neighborhood residents. We select a few souvenirs from Dovecote — including a lighted grapevine ball like those that glow from the Fearington trees after dusk — and browse the shelves of McIntyre's Fine Books until it's time to prepare for dinner.

Decked in heels and pearls, we saunter back to the historic restaurant where we indulge in pre-dinner cocktails on the front porch while our table is prepared. Once inside, we're treated to the magnificent show that diners have come to expect from dinner at the Fearington. Four wine-paired courses await us, and we linger for hours, passing dishes back and forth, eager to sample more of Executive Chef Colin Bedford's handiwork.

"Chefs have to live in the moment,"



some of the village highlights:

THE BELTED GOAT: Coffee, wine, chocolates, sandwiches, and Beltie memorabilia
OLD GRANARY: Full-service dining featuring contemporary American cuisine
DOVECOTE: Jewelry, home décor, The Fearington Collection, and art
MCINTYRE'S FINE BOOKS: Independent bookstore offering a selection of popular titles, classics, and cookbooks
ROOST: A casual courtyard beer garden with nibbles available
VIETRI: Handcrafted Italian dinnerware and accessories

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ABOVE: More than 30 Belted Galloway cows — also dubbed Belties or Oreo cows — call Ferrington's fields home. The rare Scottish beef cows were introduced to the United States in the 1940s. Once R.B. Fitch got word of the breed, he bought one male and five females. Today, the nearly perfect belts make Ferrington's Belties some of the most prized in the country. **LEFT:** Relais & Chateaux properties are known for the "Five C" standards: character, courtesy, calm, charm, and cuisine.



he tells us on one of his stops through the dining room. "I'm obsessed with freshness, and I'm fortunate to work with a number of local farmers who provide some of the area's best produce."

The result? Hyper-local seasonal delicacies like the revered Goat Lady Dairy Panna Cotta with Elderflower Jelly, House-Cured Bacon with Lobster and Vanilla Crème Fraîche, Wild Mushroom-and-Almond Torchon with Glazed Mustard Sabayon, and the Wild Garlic Carolina Gold Risotto with Apple-and-Vanilla Jam.

Then, there's dessert. With Colin's recommendation, we select the Hot Chocolate Soufflé — an iconic family treat introduced by Ferrington chef and author Edna Lewis — that once graced the cover of *Gourmet* magazine.

After an indulgent evening (the inn's mattresses, linens, and shower heads are in such demand that they're sold in Dovecote), we wake to eager anticipation of the morning's highlight: an in-room massage by a licensed therapist, the ideal transition (if you must) from Ferrington bliss back to the schedule-strapped real world.



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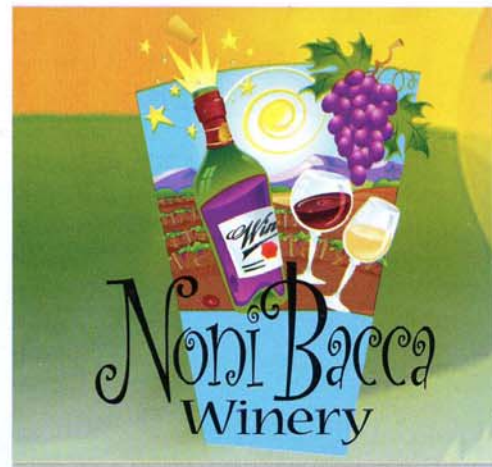
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“I’m obsessed with freshness, and I’m fortunate to work with a number of local farmers who provide some of the area’s best produce.”

After checkout, we pick up a handful of pamphlets advertising upcoming events. From a wildly popular culinary school series, to winemaker dinners with sommelier and wine director Maximilian Kast, to book signings with renowned local and national authors, there’s always a reason to return to Ferrington — a fact that fulfills the long-ago dreams of R.B. and Jenny.

For more information about the Ferrington experience, visit www.ferrington.com, or call 919-542-2121.



if you go

Ferrington’s Girlfriends Getaway package includes two nights of accommodations, three-course dinners both evenings, an in-room massage, a \$25 gift card for the village shops, as well as Champagne, truffles, and Molton Brown gift bags upon arrival. Rates range from \$752 for one person per room or \$1,025 for double occupancy. Taxes will apply and beverages with dinner are not included. An optional two-hour chocolate truffle-making class with Ferrington’s chocolatier may be added for \$75 per person.

founding father

“My father started Ferrington in the mid-70s,” says Keebe Fitch, founder of McIntyre’s Fine Books and public relations manager for Fitch Creations. “One of the things he and my late mother — his collaborator — loved about Ferrington was that it offered an opportunity to execute their unique vision for a community and also experiment and try new things, be it store concepts or menu development. They really enjoyed the intellectual challenges of being in business, and in different businesses. It’s fun to see that Dad is still very much that way today!”

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