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THE FEARRINGTON HOUSE INN PITTSBORO, NC



photos courtesy of The Fearington House Inn

You'll find the Fearington House Inn about eight miles south of Chapel Hill on a rural stretch of US 15-501 in North Carolina. It's closer to college towns than a resort area and at first glance, it looks like a really pretty farm. There's a tall silo, an aged dairy barn and curious-looking cows that are black at either end and white in the middle – kind of like bovine Oreos. Turns out, those are prize-winning cows called Belted Galloways and a few years ago in 2008, Jamie and Alfalfa, a cow and calf pair from Fearington, took the Grand Champion Award for a cow and calf pair in their breed at the North American International Livestock Exposition, the world's largest all-breed, purebred livestock competition. Jamie and Alfalfa also took top honors at the North Carolina State Fair in October of that same year. Belted Galloways, or "Belties" as they're affectionately known, are a rare breed of Scottish beef cattle and the beloved unofficial Fearington mascot. In fact, when you visit the Fearington website, a tiny image of a Beltie appears in your browser address bar.

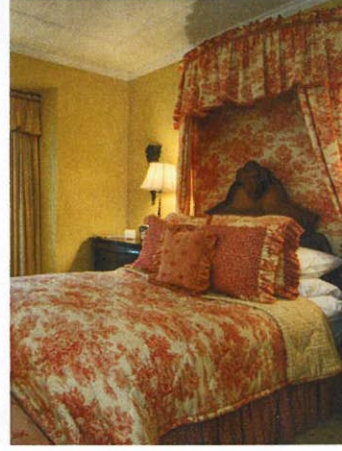
Jamie and Alfalfa aren't the only award-winners at Fearington these days. As rare as the Scottish bovines are, it's rarer still to see a property as decorated as the Fearington House Inn & Restaurant, much less one on a country road in the Piedmont of North Carolina. Name the award and it seems Fearington has been honored with it, from AAA Five Diamond Awards for both the Inn and Restaurant to a Forbes (formerly Mobil) Five Star Award for the Inn and a Forbes Four Star Award for the restaurant. Fearington House has been named among the Top Ten Small U.S. Hotels in *Condé Nast Traveler*, listed as one of North America's Top Hotels and voted the #3 Best Value Worldwide by *Travel + Leisure* readers. In addition, the Fearington House Restaurant has long embraced environmentally responsible practices and is the only Certified Green Restaurant that is also a AAA Five Diamond Award winner. The Restaurant actively sources organic produce, meats and fish from local farmers and farmers markets, including the growers-only Fearington Farmers Market, now in its 21st year. In addition to on-site bee pollination and a comprehensive recycling program that includes recycling the grease from its fryers, the Restaurant also harvests fruits, flowers and herbs from its own gardens and greenhouses.

Fearington is a modern 1,400-acre utopia that includes the Fearington Village, which is home to the Inn, The Spa at Fearington and a selection of shops and restaurants surrounded by extensive gardens, pastures and a community of nearly 2,000 residents. It was created by developer R.B. Fitch, who was born and raised just north of Fearington in Chapel Hill, which was then a small town of about 4,000 people. R.B. graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1955 and spent three years flying F-100s in the Air Force. During a tour in England, he fell under the spell of the English countryside and its close-knit villages. R.B. returned home and founded Fitch Creations, which began with remodeling kitchens, building homes and developing small subdivisions. In 1974, R.B. bought the 640-acre dairy farm that had been in the Fearington family for generations, dating back to the 1700s. He envisioned a planned community that combined his small town know-your-neighbor upbringing with the charm of the English villages he loved.

Fearington maintains a profound sense of place, seamlessly blending elements of the original Fearington farm and its North Carolina heritage into today's Fearington Village. Many of the farm's buildings have been re-purposed including the granary, which has been transformed into the Old Granary Restaurant, and most recently, Roost, a beer garden that serves craft beers, wines by the glass and light fare in the cottage that was once the Fearington farm corn crib. Fitch Creations still owns and manages most of the businesses, including the flagship Fearington House Inn & Restaurant and the newly opened Spa at Fearington situated in the heart of Fearington Village. The Spa was an idea ten years in the making and completes the retreat experience at Fearington, offering a range of treatments from massages and manicures to facials. The 4,000 square foot facility overlooks the Village and fronts a courtyard apothecary garden. The interior is soft, bright and appealing, awash in muted colors and natural light with comfortable, simple furnishings and bare floors. Inspired by the look of a Swedish farmhouse, The Spa has four private treatment rooms, a large studio for manicures and pedicures and a boutique shop called Haven stocked with skincare and apothecary products.

The Fearington House Inn is surrounded by extensive formal gardens, rolling green pastures and a herd of grazing Belties. Its 32 rooms and suites are accessible through courtyard gardens and each is uniquely decorated in a style of country elegance reminiscent of both Southern homes and English manor houses. A mix of antique furniture, luxe fabrics and original artwork is tailored to suit each room, while bathrooms feature marble vanities stocked with posh Molton Brown amenities, micro-fiber robes and heated towel racks. If you can swing the Grand Suite, its bathroom has a free-standing jetted tub that's so lovely, you can't wait to dive in. A full gourmet breakfast and afternoon tea are served every day and you'll find port and truffles at turndown, all included with your room.

In addition to its many accolades, The Fearington House Restaurant also boasts *Wine Spectator's* Best of Award of Excellence from 2004 until the present. Housed in the Fearington family homestead built in 1927, the dining rooms are intimate and furnished in a style similar to the Inn. The farm-to-fork Restaurant offers a menu that changes periodically, reflecting the growing seasons of local produce. Executive Chef Colin Bedford is at the helm in collaboration with local farmers and Sommelier Max Kast, who regularly changes the restaurant's 800-label wine list to pair selections with the current menu. Bedford has an eye for tradition and his inspired, innovative take on local fare is combined with breathlessly beautiful plate presentation. The menu features items such as wild garlic Carolina gold risotto with apple and vanilla jam, steamed North Carolina mountain trout with saffron gnocchi and Hickory Grove cheese soufflé with roasted beets, mustard and horseradish sabayon. Among a ridiculously tempting selection of desserts, most notably the warm treacle tart with burnt butter ice cream, you'll find the legendary Fearington staple hot chocolate soufflé, originally introduced by acclaimed Southern chef and author Edna Lewis in 1983 and photographed at The Fearington House Restaurant for the cover of *Gourmet* magazine in 1984.



It's easy to see why Fearington is one of the South's most celebrated wedding destinations. The pastoral beauty of the property, combined with its ability to offer an extraordinary culinary experience, creates serious event allure. Fearington's first wedding was held in front of the Fearington House Restaurant in 1981 and since then, the property's event capabilities have grown to offer a complete wedding experience. Fearington's event staff includes on-site special event coordinators, in-house floral and cake designers and a chocolatier. Fearington can literally offer complete event production from the rehearsal dinner to the cake cutting and everything in between, including exquisite accommodations for the bride and groom's wedding night.

Ceremonies can be held outdoors nearly anywhere, whether on the lawn of Dovecote Garden, by the water sculpture in the White Garden or simply under the shade of pecan trees. The options are limited only by what you can imagine and charming transitions from ceremony to cocktail and reception venues can be made along serpentine brick paths winding through the formal gardens. Climate controlled venues include the intimate Garden House or the Garden Terrace featuring a dramatic wood-burning fireplace and room for parties of up to 250. Many receptions are held in the spectacular Barn at Fearington, the entrance hallway of which is scattered with organic, dripping masses of tiny white lights that have become a signature element. The Barn is at once both rustic and elegant, easily styled an infinite number of ways and its cobblestone front terrace is a fantastic setting for pre-reception cocktails.

R.B. Fitch brought a herd of six Belted Galloways to Fearington in the early 1980s and the herd has grown to over thirty Bellies grazing in the pastures around Fearington Village. Similarly, Fearington is the only development that R.B. Fitch is involved in and with his care, it has been carefully crafted and continues to grow and develop, though he gives much of the credit to the property's talented, dedicated staff. Fearington is a refreshing experience, whether for an event or just a weekend away. It's a study in juxtapositions that seem surprising on paper, but fit together perfectly in real life as though it could never have been realized any other way. The property is at once formal and casual, rustic and sophisticated. Manicured gardens are situated beside open pastures. Afternoon tea is served each day and wedding receptions are held in a barn, though admittedly it is an exceptional barn. On a rural road in an unexpected place in the heart of North Carolina's Piedmont, you'll find a level of excellence you'd be hard-pressed to locate in some of the world's most exclusive zip codes. It's a curious spot where a AAA Five Diamond Award-winning, Forbes Five Star Award-winning inn shares its fame with a herd of cows, but then again, they're pretty special cows. BMT



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