

Gone to Ghana: Harvest Festival

Written by Cordie Aziz

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The Fetu Afahye Festival Harvest Festival takes place the first Saturday in September and is one of the biggest and brightest festivals Ghana has to offer. Intended to honor the Gods of harvesting, this festival attracts thousands each year and consists of two days of non-stop celebration. Of course, I didn't know anything about this until I haphazardly showed up the first Saturday in September.

Missing the smell of charcoal and the tang of sweet barbeque sauce that Labor Day weekend, I decided to go Cape Coast with an American girlfriend of mine. She had mentioned there was a festival going on and we should check out it. After realizing that my desire for barbeque wouldn't be filled that weekend, I decided why not. After all, festivals always seem to present opportunities to eat good food.

Now this was not my first time in Cape Coast, I had been there once before when I visited the slave castles in January so I had a slight expectation of what to expect. However, as we arrived on the scene, it was apparent that I hadn't done my homework because this festival was definitely more reminiscent of Mardi Gras. Literally thousands of people were packed into the narrow streets of the city, dancing and chanting music.

We arrived just as the Chiefs from various regions were being paraded around, so we found ourselves in the thick of things quicker than expected. In fact, I was amazed at how we were encompassed so quickly in the crowd. Before I knew it, we were in the middle of the street standing within inches of the various entourages that accompanied the chiefs. We were pushed around by enthusiastic tribal dancers and people excitedly running up to their chiefs offering gifts of kente cloth. Not to mention, the occasional stampede that occurred if a chief threw out a few pieces of the Gods' candy.

I must admit, this parade was definitely one of the most regal things I had ever seen. Chiefs were carried in these boat-like thrones and each had their own entourage and drummers. Most

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impressive was the gold jewelry these chiefs were adorned in; I can only imagined how much it weighed. However, the men who carried these thrones upon their shoulders didn't seem to mind as they too danced along to the beat.

Our day trip quickly turned into a night trip, and as the sun set we toured the local bars with live music and made new friends along the way. I quickly forgot about my barbeque as I snacked on kebabs and sugared popcorn, which, if you ask me, rivals funnel cake any day. The sun set, the music continued and then the sun rose again. Despite our late evening, we woke up early Sunday to eat breakfast and wish our friends good-bye. Oguaaa Fetu Afahye, was my first festival in Ghana, and I must confess, I can't wait to go back next year.