

# TAILGATING, AGGIE STYLE

by John Brade...06

**W**hether you come loaded in an RV party wagon or just a single two-seater, tailgating at Texas A&M allows you the chance to kick back and enjoy the sights and sounds of the football game day atmosphere. In Aggieland, warm-hearted strangers meet you with open arms as well as open barbecue pits.

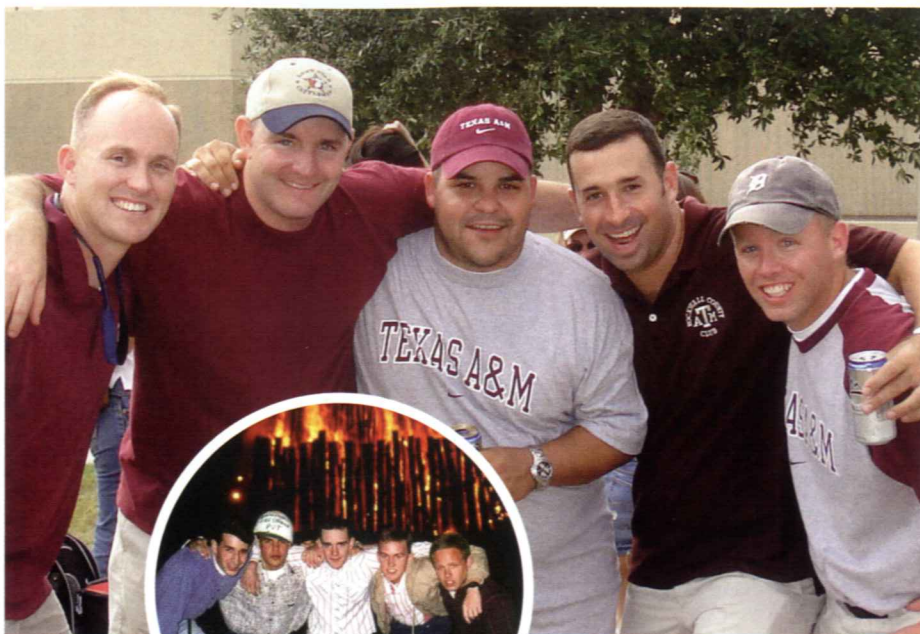
Between the pigs-on-the-grill and the pigskin on the field, the Aggie fan has become quite the connoisseur of the “art of the tailgate,” if you will.

Tailgating—which originated as just that—sitting on the tailgate of your car or truck in the stadium parking lot waiting for the game to begin—has certainly evolved over the years. The Aggieland of today isn’t your great-grandfather’s tailgate, but it still evokes the spirit and camaraderie that would make him proud. It has, quite simply, taken on a life of its own.

From custom-made tents to custom-made buses, elaborate computer set-ups to ESPN blaring on television screens and barbecue pits the size of small horses, these Aggies are serious tailgaters.

Take four former students—Bryan Reibel, Javier Horta, Rob Murphey and Shad Kresta, all Class of ‘00—for instance. They’ve customized an old school bus into their Aggie tailgating vehicle and named it “The Spirit.” Decked out with customized benches, a television and an awesome Aggie paint job, it travels from Houston to College Station for every home game and leaves no doubt to passers-by that the Aggie Spirit is alive and well.

“We wanted this bus to be a positive meeting place for fellow Aggies on game day,” explains Kresta, “Our tailgates are growing with each game as people see us, and it can’t help but evoke a passion for Texas A&M.”



ABOVE: Todd Snelgrove, Trey Powers, Steve Saldana, Alex Miller and Keith Owen, all Class of '94, tailgating at the Texas A&M vs. Texas Tech game in 2006.

CIRCLE: The Aggie friends at Bonfire, 1990, during their freshman year.

BOTTOM LEFT: “The Spirit” game day bus travels from Houston to College Station for every home game.

BOTTOM RIGHT: The Heberts' Family gathers at their family banner—“Heberts' Hullabaloo”—and tent on game day.

For others, Aggie tailgating is a chance to maintain long-term relationships with friends and Classmates and reconnect with student organizations and Corps outfits.

Steve Saldana, Todd Snelgrove, Trey Powers, Alex Mill and Keith Owen, all Class of '94, still show their continued support for the Aggies on game day. “We are all still close today,” explains Saldana, “When I think about the bonds of friendship we formed from living in the dorm, sharing Aggie traditions and celebrating Bonfire, it

makes me very happy that we are still friends and can meet up and celebrate on game day. To me, that is a true testament to the Aggie experience and the Aggie tailgate.” >>

### Editor's Note

As this issue of *Texas Aggie* went to press, Texas A&M was preparing to announce major changes to the university's policy on tailgating on campus. To learn more about those changes, go to <http://tailgating.tamu.edu>.



LEFT: Elizabeth & Clare Jesulaitis, daughters of Kriki Oliver Jesulaitis '92 and nieces of Will Oliver '91, enjoy a pregame hug among the festivities.



CIRCLE: Sydney Ann Hudgins, Class of 2028, daughter of Kyle '95 and Samantha Hudgins '96, decked out for Aggie game day.



RIGHT: Displaying the gig 'em in front of another tailgating Aggie vehicle—"Bus 12." From left, Jesus Palomo '07, Ellen Lane '07, Mariella Lane '05, Brent Lane '05, Keith Lane '05, Katy Lane '02.

### A Timeline of an Aggie Tailgater The day before the game

**3 P.M.** – pull RV into Reed Arena and upon finding the perfect tailgating spot, the process of unloading the 500+ lbs. of game day “necessities” begins.

**4 P.M.** – after successfully mounting the 20-foot A&M flag, loading the pit with charcoal, setting up numerous tables and chairs, and losing two out of three games of dominoes, take a moment to observe the beauty of Kyle Field and its surroundings.

**7 P.M.** – You and your family enjoy a fine dinner consisting of the ribs you had prepared, some chicken thighs from one of your neighbors and some homemade pinto beans from another. After finishing, you walk over and share a beverage with your neighbor and are informed about what exactly goes into their secret family bean recipe.

**9 P.M.** – You put the children to sleep and meet up with other former students to reminisce about the time you each spent at A&M, each arguing why their four, five or six years here were—by far—the best of the group.

**11 P.M.** – A full stomach of food and drink later, and having abs that hurt from laughing so much, you and your crew slowly make your way over to Kyle Field for Midnight Yell and proceed to lose your voices before game day even arrives.

**12:30 A.M.** – You are finally able to retire to your RV for the night, and anxiously await the morning, falling asleep instantly.

### Game Day

**7 A.M.** – As you prepare breakfast and get the kids dressed—in their finest A&M attire—you notice the sun rising over Kyle Field, illuminating the steadily growing sea of maroon that is starting to fill campus.

**9 A.M.** – You take the family for a campus tour and are amazed at how the campus looks nothing like it did when you were there, and can not even begin to imagine what it will look like when your children, future Classes of 2020 and 2023, will be students there.

**11 A.M.** – With burgers and hot dogs on the grill, your friends and extended family members begin to arrive. The ritual of pregame washer tournaments and football-Frisbee throwing begins, while boom boxes of the Texas Aggie Band, Singing Cadets and sports-talk radio blare in the background. With coolers being nearly as abundant as people and barbecue grills as far as the eye can see, the true tailgating experience has begun.

**NOON** – After eating more food than you thought humanly possible, you continue to hang out and have a great time with your family and friends—new and old—and are constantly reminded why you still consider

College Station and Texas A&M University the greatest place on earth.

**1:30 P.M.** – You take your family to the MSC and pick out the perfect spot to watch the Texas Aggie Band and Corps of Cadets march into Kyle Field. You walk around the MSC for awhile and are increasingly enveloped by the unyielding flood of maroon shirts and whoops.

**2 P.M.** – You enter Kyle Field and find your seats, and while doing so, you are awed at the size of the new scoreboard and visual effects added by the video screens.

**3 P.M.** – Kickoff – AAAAAAAAAA  
AAAA ... Gig'em ... Aggies ... WHOOOOP!

You thoroughly enjoy watching the game, yelling with 80,000+ die-hard Aggie fans like yourself and sawin' varsity's horns off as the Fightin' Texas Aggies BTHO their opponents for the day.

**6:30 P.M.** – The after-party victory celebration begins with an ice-cold beverage and a few dozen pounds of fajita meat on the grill. Depending on the game's outcome, you scrutinize the day's game, explain who you would have recruited and why (after a loss), or praise the coach's decisions (after a win) and begin to reminisce about all the past tailgating parties you have attended.

And, lastly, remind your co-tailgaters that even after a loss—the Aggies still won halftime. WHOOP! 🍌