

FASHION: BRILLIANT LOOKS FOR FALL

THE PREMIER MAGAZINE OF THE WEST

# COWBOYS & INDIANS

OCTOBER 2018



## BLAKE SHELTON

A CANDID CHAT WITH  
THE SUPERSTAR *VOICE* COACH  
ABOUT HIS FAMILY AND  
GROWING EMPIRE

### TASTE OF THE WEST

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# BLAKE SHELTON

ELEVEN COUNTRY ALBUMS AND 14 SEASONS OF *THE VOICE* MIGHT HAVE MADE BLAKE SHELTON A HOUSEHOLD NAME. BUT IT'S HIS LOVE FOR OKLAHOMA THAT HAS MADE HIM — TO QUOTE ONE OF HIS HITS — BACKWOODS LEGIT.



*By Alison Bonaguro*



FOR A MAN WHO DOESN'T HAVE AN UNKIND WORD FOR ANYONE, BLAKE SHELTON has had it up to here with hogs. When he sat down with *C&I* in his newly opened Ole Red Nashville, the affable country singer opened up about the long list of everything good in his life, and then came that swine problem that plagues him and every other outdoorsman in Oklahoma.

As Shelton slid his 6-foot-5 frame into a booth in The Lookout Bar — on the top floor of his five-story restaurant, bar, and music venue — he'd eschewed the trappings of modern celebrity style and stuck with the uniform that still works after nearly 25 years as a country singer: blue jeans and a jacket to match. His drawl was drawn out, his Southern charm was effortless, and his laughter was loud and hearty. And Shelton, 42, came ready to talk about how his roots made him the man he is today.

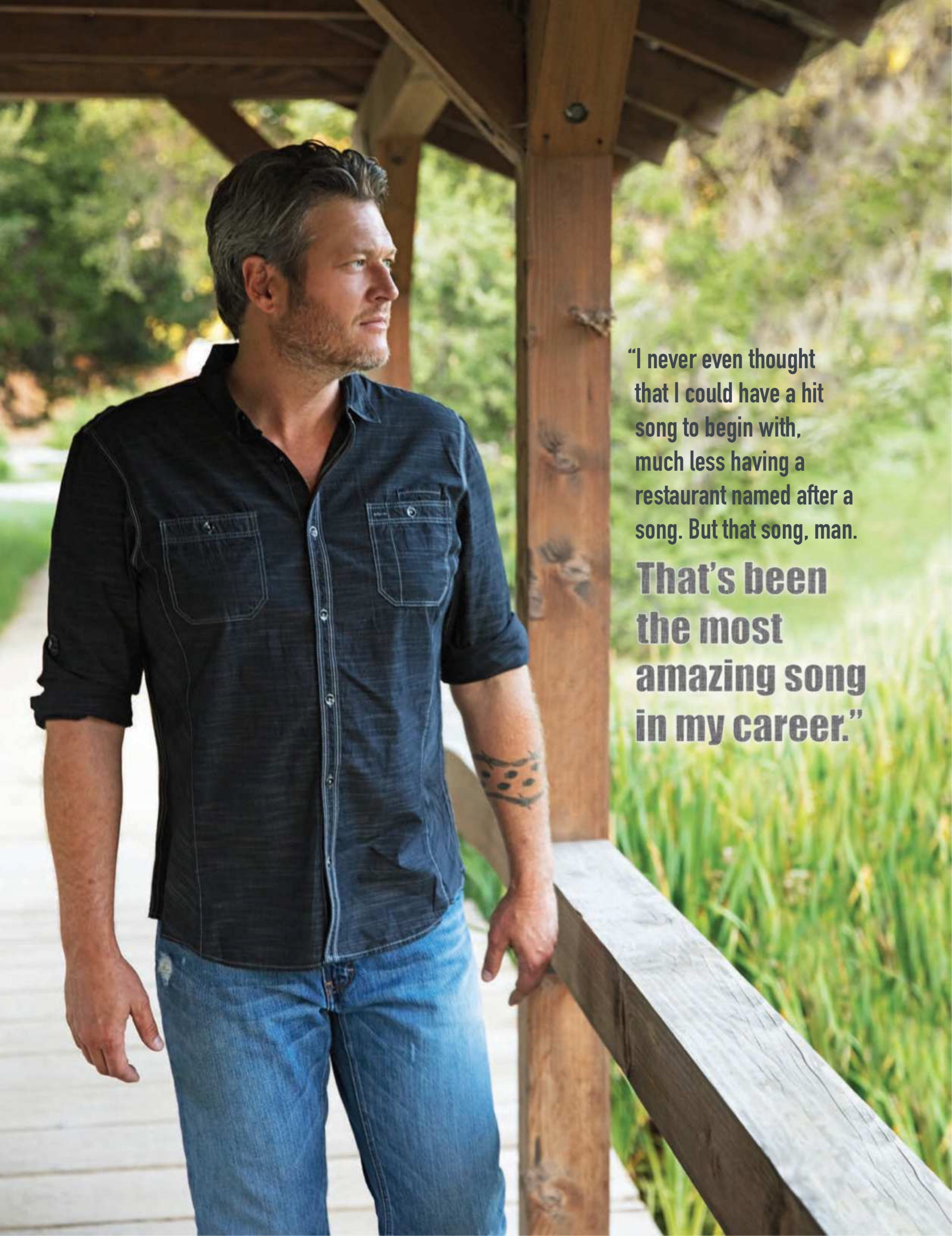
Every bit of Ole Red Nashville reflects his good nature. It's as rustic as it is masculine, and upon initial appraisal, every inch appears to be characteristically Shelton. There is barn wood on the floor, barn wood on the walls, sliding barn doors, and a menu that boasts some straight-out-of-Okie specialties like catfish corn dogs and redneck nachos — even a whiskey and moonshine cocktail called Tishomingo Sunset. But there is no sign of any clichés you might find on menus near the Oklahoma-Texas border: no Rocky Mountain oysters, fried onion burgers, fried okra, chicken-fried steaks, or black-eyed peas.

The restaurant's flagship spot is in Shelton's current hometown of Tishomingo (40 miles south of his childhood home in Ada, with a population of a little more than 3,000 last time the U.S. Census Bureau checked), and is named for one of Shelton's early songs, "Ol' Red," a cover of a 1990 George Jones tune about the sordid sex life of a prison warden's dog.









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**That’s been the most amazing song in my career.”**



**Cowboys & Indians:** *Now that you've opened your second Ole Red, let's talk about that name. Why name it after your 2002 song instead of just calling it Blake Shelton's Place?*

**Blake Shelton:** I never even thought that I could have a hit song to begin with, much less having a restaurant named after a song. But that song, man. That's been the most amazing song in my career. Most people think that that was a No. 1 hit, but it never was. I think it only got to No. 14, at best. It wasn't even a Top 10 hit. But it was kind of a cult favorite. And over the years, for some reason, it continues to gain momentum. Songs usually have their moment, and then they go away. Mine do, anyway. But this song lives on. So Colin Reed [chairman and CEO of Ryman Hospitality Properties], a friend of mine for a long time and someone who has taken it upon himself to really honor the country music part of Nashville, is working hard at preserving that. He looks at it as his responsibility. The name Ole Red was his idea, because of everything the song has: love, heartache, murder, and freedom.

**C&I:** *And the instinctive sex drive of a prison warden's redbone coonhound and his bluetick coonhound love interest.*

**Shelton:** That, too. It sure does have everything. And at first, I was like, "Ole Red? Really?" But there was just something about it. At one of our first meetings, Colin had gone ahead and had

some logos done. And when he showed me the idea for the logo, and I saw that damn dog, I was like, "I'm in. Of course, it needs to be Ole Red."

**C&I:** *When you moved to Nashville, was this kind of dream even on your to-do list?*

**Shelton:** Not at all. I mean, my God, when you drive down Broadway, and you get to this block and all the sudden there's this massive building down here and it's mine? It's overwhelming to see that. And for me personally, it's overwhelming because I can remember when this building was nothing more than old office cubicles and a gift shop downstairs.

**C&I:** *And the Ole Red in Tishomingo was the first location, because that's where you have a home now. Was that the original plan, to just have one in your town?*

**Shelton:** It was the other way around. The plan was always for the Nashville location. But my deal was this: I said, "OK, I'll do the Nashville thing, but my one stipulation is that we have to put one in my hometown." Oklahoma needs this. There are a lot of artists where I come from who would love to play at a venue like this. Because before it opened, unless someone was having a barbecue or there was a fair or something nearby, there weren't many options for people who wanted to perform. It's been a real shot in the arm to a community that really needed it.



  
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**C&I:** *So it sounds like you're doing good things for Oklahoma, but what's Oklahoma doing for you? When you're in Tishomingo, what do you love the most?*

**Shelton:** What I love now is just the being there, you know? My perfect day in Oklahoma is when I'm on my ranch and I never go out of the gates. I just stay on my property, and I don't even need to get in my truck and go anywhere. I love to spend the day on the tractor or the four-wheeler, and hunt or fish. If I'm not leaving, that's the best kind of day for me.

**C&I:** *Can you fish right there at home?*

**Shelton:** I got a lot of fishing ponds there on my property, so I mostly catch largemouth bass. But it wasn't always that easy. Back before I ever moved to Nashville, when I was still in high school, we'd go noodling. You get in the water, and you just reach your hand down under the rocks, feeling around for a big catfish. That was back when I was hellbent on killing myself, I think. But not anymore. That's why God made fishing poles. But I do still watch those noodling videos on YouTube a lot.

**C&I:** *That paints a pretty vivid picture of your youth. What else do you appreciate about the way you were raised?*

**Shelton:** I could always, and I can still always, count on my family. I could always count on seeing everybody I was related to at least a couple times a year. My family is huge. And when we used to get together — I mean all of


us, the entire family — you could always count on an enormous Thanksgiving and a gigantic Christmas. When my grandmother was still alive, she was the glue that kept us all together. When we'd start to plan these gatherings, we'd be like, "Where are we even gonna do this?" There were a couple of times when we actually had to rent a building somewhere so we could fit everybody in. But since she passed away, it's a little sparser. This cousin will get together with that cousin. We all see each other eventually, but not as much as we used to.

**C&I:** *I know that sometimes it takes losing someone to remind you how strong those family ties need to be. You lost your brother Richie tragically young, when you were just a teenager, and that eventually inspired you to write "Over You" with Miranda Lambert when you two were still married. You must still think about Richie every day.*

**Shelton:** Look, you're never gonna get over it. For me, my brother was my big brother. I mean, I wanted to be him. I wanted to look like him, dress like him, listen to what he listened to, and be into the things he was into. So when he was killed in a car accident, it was literally like the world went silent. There was a void in my world all of a sudden, and I'm still not over it. I'm just used to it.

**C&I:** *Even with Richie gone, do you feel like your big, extended family made you the man you are today?*

**Shelton:** Well, I was raised around good people. People



**"I love to spend the day on the tractor or the four-wheeler, and hunt or fish. If I'm not leaving, that's the best kind of day for me."**







## OLE RED MUSTS

A FEW OF THE NASHVILLE LOCATION'S FAVORITE DRINKS AND EATS

**Tishomingo Sunset**, with a blend of whiskey, moonshine, and more.

**Cumberland Punch**, with rum, pineapple liqueur, and, get this, an edible orchid.

**Ole Red Prosecco**, a coconut rum, prosecco, and Red Bull Red concoction.

**The Champagne of Fried Chicken**, marinated with Miller High Life.

**Redneck Nachos**, made with kettle chips, chicken, cheese, and barbecue sauce.

**Big Soft Pretzel** served with “that white cheese stuff” (Shelton’s words, not ours).

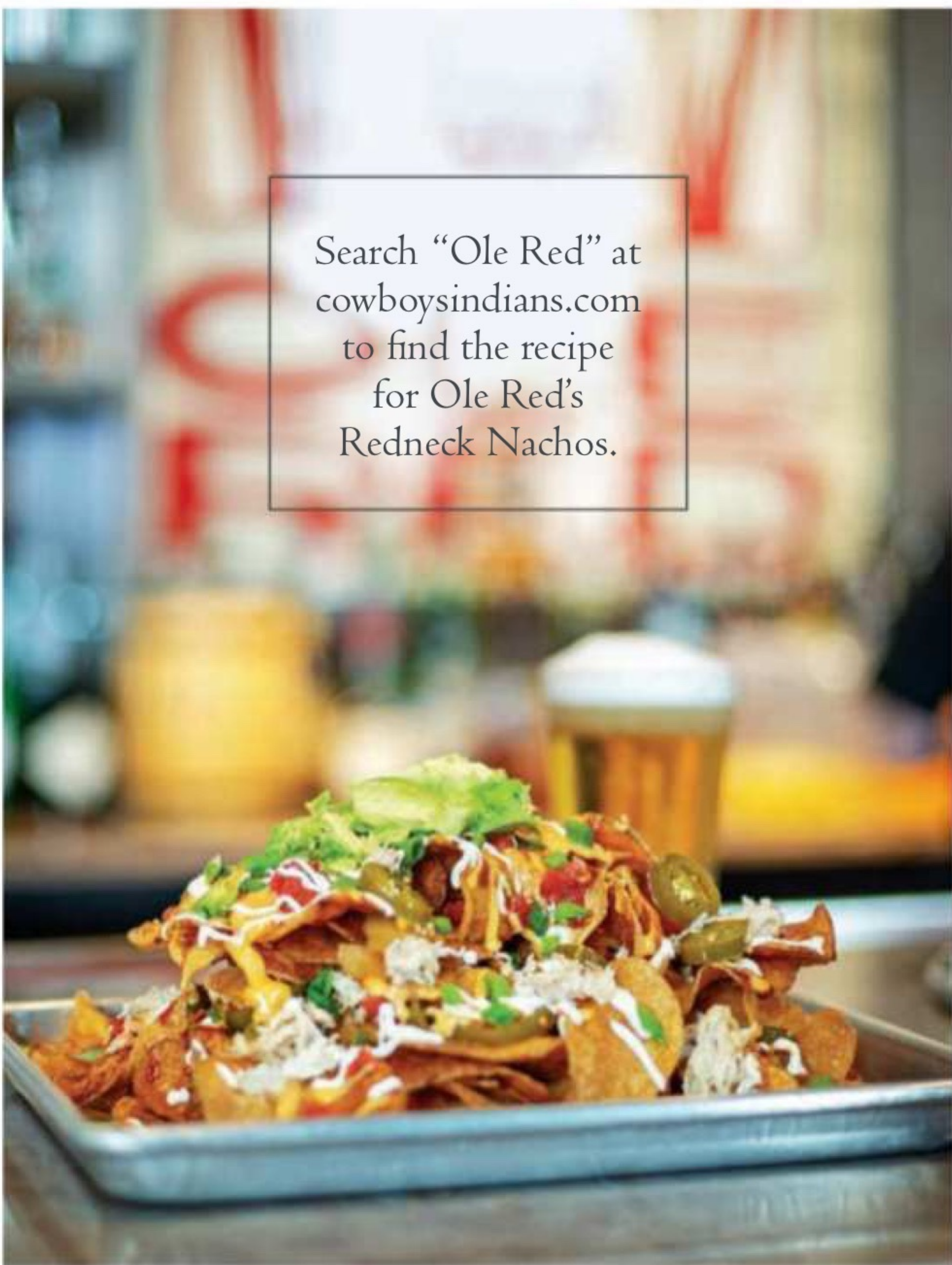


### CUMBERLAND PUNCH

1½ ounces Diplomático Reserva Exclusiva  
½ ounce Combier  
¼ ounce Giffard Caribbean Pineapple Liqueur  
½ ounce orgeat  
¼ ounce fresh lime juice  
4 dashes Angostura bitters


Shake well and strain over ice into a double rocks glass. Garnish with orchid and pineapple wedge.

Search “Ole Red” at [cowboysindians.com](http://cowboysindians.com) to find the recipe for Ole Red’s Redneck Nachos.







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who worked hard. And people who had a lot of fun. That's the one thing I got from my family more than anything. My family, it's like they're entertainers. Every single one of them. They are so funny, and so much fun to be around. I know that's where I got my sense of humor, and my ability to be an entertainer and not take myself so seriously. No one in my family takes themselves seriously.

**C&I:** *Was that work ethic passed down to you, even before you started chasing that neon rainbow?*

**Shelton:** It was, very early on. My first job changed my life, so yes. For the first time, I was making my own money. And it was the greatest feeling I'd ever experienced. I was roofing houses, and I did that during two summers when I was still in high school. Man, it was such hard work, but I loved it. I got in shape for the first time in my life, and I was making money. I had more money than I knew what to do with. I was 16, and got \$300 a week, and I was like, "What the hell am I gonna do with all this money? I'm gonna have to buy some s---." So I was buying everything I wanted. The first thing I did was buy myself a boat. Then I bought a black Takamine guitar that was just like the one I saw Garth Brooks playing on his first television special.

**C&I:** *I watched that, too. This is Garth Brooks, right? In the early '90s?*

**Shelton:** That was the one.

So I had enough to buy that same kind of guitar because of my roofing. That job was good to me and good for me. In fact, I ended up introducing my boss Mike to my mother, and they got married, and they're still married 20-some years later.

**C&I:** *As a teenager, you bought your own boat so you could fish. What other toys did you invest in?*

**Shelton:** When I was 15, I bought myself my first bow. It was used, and I had a couple of cousins who bowhunted back then, so they taught me how. Bowhunting wasn't that popular then, so you just shot aluminum arrows with a leather tab. I got pretty good at it, because at that age you get the hang of things a lot quicker. If I were just learning how to bowhunt now, I'd probably have a hard time getting it through my brain. But because I started at a young age, it became true hunting. Like if you got out there and got something with your bow and arrow, you were really doing it.

**C&I:** *Eventually you learned to rifle hunt, too, though. Right?*

**Shelton:** I did, and I love it. I love both kinds of hunting. When I rifle hunt, I'm out there for whitetails. But rifle season in Oklahoma is only two weeks long, and the bowhunting season is longer. Then there's the hog situation.

**C&I:** *There's a hog situation?*

**Shelton:** There is in Oklahoma. It is overrun



with wild hogs, and it's actually a real problem. Half the time when you go deer hunting in Oklahoma, you'll end up shooting two, three, four, or even five hogs in a day. Just because they're coming out and they're pretty much taking over. You don't ever even see a deer because these hogs take over an area and push out any native wildlife we have. It's gone from being cool to see a wild hog once in a while, to now. And now, it's war. The state is doing their part and getting involved, but they need to be eradicated. They're an invasive species. It's definitely a problem, for quail, for a lot of reptiles, for amphibians. Everything's going to be endangered now because of these hogs.

**C&I:** *So, in a perfect Oklahoma world, there would be no hogs, and just a day spent at home fishing and hunting. What else would be part of that perfect day?*

**Shelton:** Gwen [Stefani] would be cooking for everyone. But I eat terribly. I have to figure out how to get better. I'll usually sit down at dinner time, and Gwen will make this big dinner, like she'll make a piece of salmon and a salad for us. And then there are her three little boys [Kingston, Zuma, and Apollo] there, and so there's macaroni and cheese and all those other things for them. I'll look at her plate and she'll have the salmon and salad, and I'll look at my plate and it's all the s--- she made for the boys: chicken nuggets, mac and cheese,

those little pretzel bread rolls. I've got to get better at that one of these days.

**C&I:** *Your music isn't always about this country life you've been living. But there are a few that seem like they were pulled right from your upbringing, with gravel roads, screen doors, hollers, blue collars, homemade wine, drinking from the hose, being raised on love, and how it all makes you truly backwoods legit. There was "That's What I Call Home" in 2001, "My Neck of the Woods" in 2003, "Boys 'Round Here" in 2013, and, more recently, "I Lived It." Do songs like that matter more to you?*

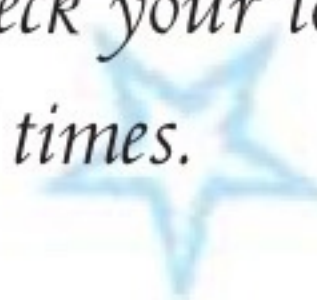
**Shelton:** I can't sit here and say it's important for me to only sing songs like that about my life. But then again, isn't it strange that I go back

to that without even meaning to sometimes? I don't go, "Oh, I have to have a song about what it's like down home." And yet, I gravitate toward that. Those are the songs I like right away when I hear them.

**C&I:** *You mean even when other country singers are singing them?*

**Shelton:** Yes, the old-school ones. That's my favorite thing about all those old Alabama records. They always had so many songs about where they came from, and how much it meant to be back home. I always gravitate toward those songs, and I guess that's how much home means to me.

*You can catch Shelton on his 15th season of The Voice, currently airing on NBC. Check your local listings for days and times.*



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