

# BLAKE & MIRANDA'S *Engagement Party!*

Country's cutest couple celebrate their upcoming nuptials with good friends, simple Southern food—and some target practice

BY DANIELLE ANDERSON AND KAY WEST

It was the perfect setting for a celebration of love: a starlit summer evening, a big white tent perched in the rolling hills of a Tennessee country estate, candlelight, freshly cut flowers . . . and his-and-hers shotguns. And if you know anything about Blake Shelton and Miranda Lambert, you know it was just right.

"Our favorite presents were matching flasks and matching shotguns," says

Lambert, 26 (the guns were a gift from their agents). "We were outside the city limits, so we went right out of the tent and tried them out—it's a real shotgun wedding!" Adds pal Trace Adkins: "When they started shooting their new shotguns, that's when it became a Blake and Miranda party!"

And the night was only just beginning. Next up? Karaoke. "Blake is crazy for it!" says Lambert. "When the karaoke started, that was it. I think it was the most fun party I've ever been to, and I've been to a lot of parties." Says Shelton: "I'm mostly just a fan of making an ass out of myself and watching other people do the same. Karaoke seems to be the thing that brings that out in us."

That "us" included A-list guests Adkins, Reba McEntire, Luke Bryan, Dierks Bentley and Martina McBride, who took turns at the mic, dueting on old-school country hits as well as rock and country classics from the '70s and '80s. "We didn't have to be about business, we could all just let our hair down and have fun," says Lambert, who

*"It made it feel official, like, 'Hey y'all, we're really getting married!'"*

—MIRANDA LAMBERT

*Miranda shows off her ring!*





"We have a long year ahead of us planning the wedding," says Lambert (with Shelton) "so this was a great way to start it off."

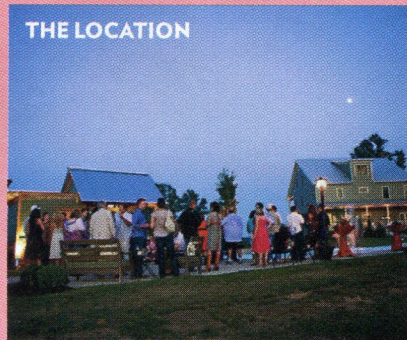
## THE DETAILS

**THE VENUE** Front Porch Farms, a traditional antebellum house on 32 acres just outside of Nashville.

**THE DECOR** The informal dining tables featured vintage quilts as tablecloths and bouquets of wildflowers for centerpieces. "We used cut and wildflowers and put them in mason jars, vintage cans, wooden boxes—everything except traditional vases," says planner Caprice Palmer.

**PERSONAL TOUCHES** The party favors were Cowhide Koozies (\$15; southernbrand.com)—a gift from Shelton's label Warner Music Nashville.

### THE LOCATION



### THE FLOWERS



### THE FAVORS



has been touring in support of her CD *Revolution*, while Shelton has been hitting the road to promote his new CD *All About Tonight*, due Aug. 10.

"It was some world-class karaoke," says Shelton. "Miranda sang a version of 'Little Rock' with Reba McEntire that they turned into 'Big-Ass Rock'—talking about her ring. Then Miranda and Martina McBride did 'Does He Love You,' which I wish to God I had recorded: It was my favorite moment of the party, just awesome. It was just one of those nights you just couldn't believe."

Perhaps the best part for Lambert

casual too. "Instead of formal seating, we did a long table in the center of the tent with benches on either side, so people could get up and down and visit everyone. We wanted Blake and Miranda to feel like they were home—for it to be that comfortable."

The evening also served as a bit of practice for the bride- and groom-to-be. "Blake and I didn't sit down at all. We wanted to make sure we talked to everyone who came, so we ate on the run and just made the rounds. This was actually the first time we have gotten to celebrate our engagement with friends, and it seems like it made

*"Seeing Miranda have fun, that's what makes me the happiest"*

—BLAKE SHELTON

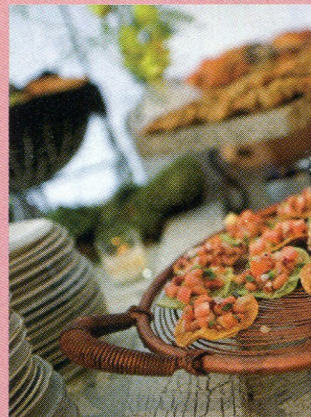
was that she didn't have any part in the planning. "I just showed up and had fun," says Lambert of the fete put together by her publicist Kathy Best with the help of her mom, Bev Lambert. "My mom told them what kind of food Blake and I like, but I was so surprised when I got there at how much thought had gone into it. It was all so perfect—not fancy, kind of rustic and country. But pretty too. Every detail was taken care of." The most important detail? A full stock of the singers' favorite cocktail, Bacardi and Sprite Zero. (Blake calls the drink the Blake-arita.)

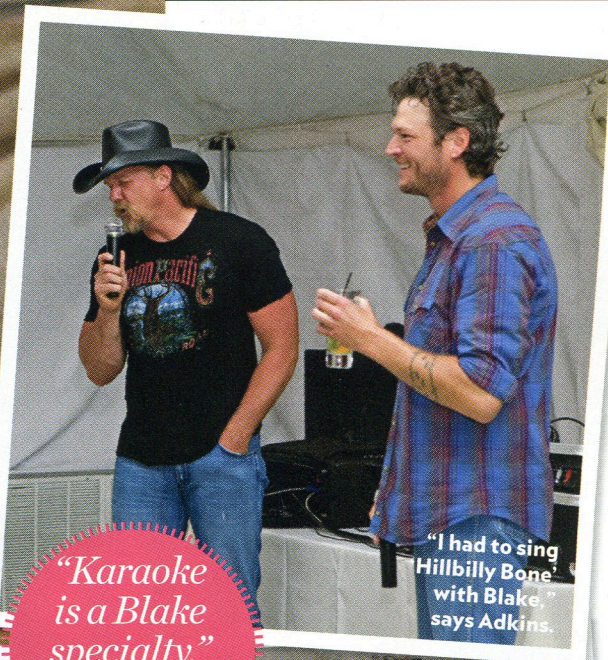
Also on the menu were fried green tomato sliders, smoked gouda mac-and-cheese "cupcakettes" and Tennessee cheese straw-crust chicken bites. "It had to be pickup food because nobody wanted a formal dinner or even to bother with utensils," says caterer Shannon Bates of Nashville's Chef's Market. "We were all just thinking of a big family picnic." To capture their laid-back style, event planner Caprice Palmer of Nashville's Enchanted Florist kept the decor

it feel official, like, 'Hey y'all, we're really getting married!'"

As for what's in store at the actual wedding next spring, there may or may not be shots fired, but Lambert says she's letting a professional handle the details. "We're so busy, I'm leaving it to the wedding planner," she says. "But any time I have an idea or see something I like, I cut it out or print it out and put it in a folder. I have a folder, and my mom has one too."

"We love karaoke," says Lambert, who sang "What Was I Thinking" with pal Dierks Bentley.



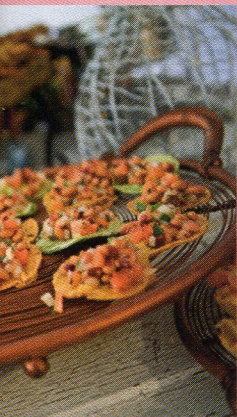


*"Karaoke is a Blake specialty," says Trace Adkins.*

*"I had to sing 'Hillbilly Bone' with Blake," says Adkins.*



*"I thought she knew it, and she thought I knew it," says Shelton of his "sucky" version of "I Love Rock 'n' Roll" with Martina McBride.*



## THE MENU

**THE THEME** "They wanted simple Southern food," says caterer Shannon Bates. Among the choices: Jack Daniels pork loin, black-eyed pea salsa in tortilla cups, corn avocado salad and pink lemonade.

**A MUST-HAVE FOR MIRANDA** "Miranda's mom said her favorite food is chicken-fried steak," says Bates. "So we came up with a way

to do it on a skewer, then had gravy to dip it into."

**THE BIGGEST HIT** Deviled eggs. "People ate the heck out of those eggs," says Bates.

**AND FOR DESSERT . . .** We made mini cupcakes so people could try every flavor and not feel guilty," says Bates. "We decorated them with edible glitter and sugar horseshoes."