



Same Roots, Different Field

Alabama athlete-turned-chef promotes beef in coastal town.

by Laura Conaway, Certified Angus Beef LLC

Sitting on the back deck, 7 feet from salt water, Chris Sherrill's right where he never thought he'd be. With a drawl and handshake that reveal his roots, the Alabama chef had no plans for the title.

"My dream was to play college football," Sherrill says matter of factly, "so I worked toward that."

A different title — one with trophies and flashy rings — drove his daydreams. An injury at 18 sidelined them all.

"The top of my body went one way, and the lower half the other," he tells. That was it — the moment that set his life on the course he now craves.

At Salt, his new concept at the San Roc Cay Marina in Orange



Beach, Ala., Sherrill brings skill and natural talent to a different game.

He's studied his opponents and, with a recipe book of plays, equips his team for touchdown after touchdown.

"What we are doing is a little cutting-edge for Alabama," Sherrill says. Salt features an "ultra fresh" menu that dispels traditions of fried shrimp and imports. Whole

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Suave to social media, he says, “I may do a Facebook Live video from a farm where we are harvesting okra one day or show footage from the Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) brand Chef Tour the next.”

That break from the kitchen, a chance to learn from the people who produce his food and share with those who consume it, keeps Sherrill growing, and Salt relevant.

“There are great restaurants in our town, and that competition breeds excellence,” he says. “We work together, but we’re all on our toes to outdo each other, too.”

One way he does that is through his beef.

Dual strengths

“We grow the best seafood in the world, and we tout that,” Sherrill says of the renowned catch common to the Gulf. “We believe that CAB goes out and finds the best beef in the world.”

A visit to the company’s headquarters left the chef intrigued by the process of dry aging.

“I was just blown away by the smells, the pungentness, the beauty of it,” he says. “I was hooked.”



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He wanted it to be a signature of Salt.

Not one to waste or spend in excess, he took a Coca-Cola® beverage cooler and a store-bought humidifier and let the coastal humidity do its thing.

“It holds at 39° and 80%-85% humidity,” he says of his accidental artistry. “We’re hitting a home run.”

To an out-of-towner’s eye, it may seem odd, boastful beef in a coastal town, but Sherrill assures it accounts for 50% of Salt’s sales.



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That’s the best marketing you can’t buy, the chef says. The cuisine backs it up and keeps tourists and regulars coming back for more.

“A well-marbled ribeye’s the best steak in the world if you ask me,” Sherrill says.

If it were his last meal, he’d go for a 64-oz. sirloin.

“Just a big ole’ slab of sirloin,” along with truffle mashed potatoes and sautéed mushrooms and onions, “and, I’m gonna get shot for this, but a jar of A.I. Sauce® because I love it,” he says with a grin.

Just talking about food reveals Sherrill’s passion. It’s hard to imagine there was ever another in its place. Sleeves pulled up, mind running wild, the chef gig fits him fine. In fact, it allows him to work with his

wife, Jenny, who runs the front of the house. Together, they support their family of six.

“It’s been a good and long career,” Sherrill says. Barely 41, he’s got plenty up his sleeve.

To cattlemen who supply his customers with the beef they crave, he says: “Don’t give up. There are people who believe in the product and stand by it.”

Feet from the salt water, he’s doing the same. **AJ**