SHELDON SIMEON  
*Executive Chef of Mala Wailea and MiGRANT  
Founder/Owner/Chef of Tin Roof*

**Keeping It Real**

When Aerosmith’s Steven Tyler dropped by Mala Wailea last year, Executive Chef Sheldon Simeon braced himself for a big night. It was legendary Hawaiian musician Willie K’s birthday, and everything the restaurant served needed to be extra ‘ono (delicious).

Fortunately, Sheldon never stresses out easily. Big nights come with the job when you’re a star chef heading up a star restaurant on Maui’s luxurious south shore.

Tyler and Willie K wound up closing down the night with an amazing impromptu performance of the Aerosmith classic “Dream On.” And Sheldon cooked up one of his favorite Maui memories.

Keeping it real is what makes this local boy happy. Though he pops up on TV screens nationwide on cooking and culinary programs, entertains offers from major restaurants throughout the United States, and wins accolades such as Food & Wine’s 2014 “People’s Best New Chef (Northwest & Pacific)” and Hawai’i Magazine’s “Top 5 Best Hawaiian Chefs of 2014,” Sheldon always stays true to who he is.

Born in Hilo, Sheldon grew up enjoying the multiethnic flavors of his family’s home cooking. His grandparents emigrated from the Philippines to work on Hawai’i’s sugarcane and pineapple plantations, and, like other laborers, shared dishes of their culture with neighbors from Portugal, Japan and China. Their appreciation of the land and efforts to grow their own food were values passed down to Sheldon’s father, Reinior. Sheldon calls his father and mother, Juanita, his biggest lifelong influences.

“I am so thankful for my upbringing and the values that my family has instilled in me,” he says. “I am inspired by the people of Hawai’i.”

A graduate of the Maui Culinary Academy, Sheldon worked his way up from dishwasher at Aloha Mixed Plate to the opening executive chef at its sister Lahaina restaurant Star Noodle. In 2013, he skyrocketed to fame on the 10th season of Bravo TV’s Top Chef: Seattle, notching finalist and “fan favorite” honors that put Maui on the map as a culinary destination.

Sheldon’s tantalizing twist on Filipino-Hawaiian cuisine drew customer raves at his Wailea signature restaurant MiGRANT, where his menu offerings included a spice-rubbed Hibachi Hanger Steak sliced and served with Vietnamese nuoc cham dipping sauce, and the Ay Kudesh! Garlic Noodles, which carried the menu warning: “Unreal Kine Hot! Fo’ real Kine!”

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Ask those who know Sheldon best about his personality and demeanor and you’ll hear descriptions like “down to earth,” “family man,” “loves to laugh,” and “passionate about everything he does.” On days off from Mala, MiGRANT and his newest venture as founder/owner/chef of Tin Roof lunch shop, he enjoys relaxing at his Lahaina home with his wife Janice and their four children: Chloe, age 8; Peyton, age 6; Quinn, age 4; and Asher, age 2.

Sheldon is a big believer in the positive role of mentorship, which, since he oversees more than 80 employees, is definitely a good thing.

“That’s what I love most about my work: the mentoring of my team,” he says. “It is so rewarding to watch the growth of each individual. I’m grateful I’ve had the opportunity to mentor young cooks just as other chefs have mentored me.”

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For more information, visit: Facebook: [Chef Sheldon Simeon](https://www.facebook.com/chefsimeon)