

deep ROOTS

Surrounded by family on Maui's spectacular shores, chef **Sheldon Simeon** prepares a soulful spread celebrating the Hawaiian and Filipino food of his youth

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At his two Maui restaurants, Simeon works closely with the organic Kumu Farms in Wai-luku. Opposite: Simeon's children collect shells on Olowalu Beach.



Simeon takes a break from whale-watching to prep the remainder of his beach spread. Right: Peyton Simeon shows off a bowl of her dad's Ahi Poke with sweet onion.



It's a dazzling lazy Sunday on Olowalu Beach

with waves lapping in the background and a brood of wild chickens foraging between a tiki totem and an ancient banyan tree. Near the shore, Sheldon Simeon hunches over a Weber grill balanced atop volcanic beach rocks, dropping long beans and hunks of kabocha squash onto the searing grates, when a humpback whale breaches less than a mile from the coast. Seconds later, a bull male in the vicinity raises its tail and drums the

surface of the ocean, detonating a curtain of sea spray. Even Simeon, a lifelong Hawaiian, can't help but jump up and cheer like a rabid spectator at a World Series game.

This is the magic of Maui, a tropical paradise with an unremitting sense of wonder. From his restaurant kitchens (Tin Roof in Ka-hului and the new Lineage in Wai-Lea, opening this summer), Simeon hopes to expose more people to that perpetual state of awe, while also dispelling some of the misconceptions surrounding the islands' food and culture.

"Hawaiian food is more than just white rice and Spam," he says, turning his attention away from the maritime theatrics. Using a Filipino fish-and-vegetable soup called *dinengdeng* as inspiration, Simeon transforms a haul of Kumu Farms produce into a grilled salad with a gingery fish sauce vinaigrette. For Simeon and the cadre of chefs joining him today—most raised on family versions of the original—this is nostalgia on a platter,

right down to the Heinz apple cider vinegar at the recipe's core. Some might call this "soul food." Simeon prefers "dishes that tell a story."

"In my family, without a lot of money to go around, it was rare to get a rib-eye," he says, as fellow chef Jeffrey Valdez slices into a shoyu-glazed sugar steak—not some aged, marbled cut of beef, but a hulking chuck roast. He hands a slice to each of Simeon's four children, voracious after an afternoon traipsing in the sand.

"Usually my dad just went for the biggest, most affordable cut of beef. And not everyone got a perfect piece, which was actually fun," Simeon adds. "There's that same practicality and element of surprise to my cooking."

It's a reflective approach that combines a preference for ubiquitous grocery store vinegars with Simeon's undeniable culinary credentials. For every immaculate bowl of

ahi poke carved from Garden & Valley Isle Seafood's tuna, there are plenty of offcuts and "nasty bits," he says, like the braised oxtail permeating each bite of his Hoppin' Juan, a Hawaiian interpretation of the peas-and-rice Lowcountry classic.

In view of the historic Olowalu Plantation House, once home to the manager of the West Maui Sugar Company, Simeon shares recipes that have been in his family since his grandparents immigrated to Hawai'i from the Philippines to work in the island's sugar cane fields. Each dish, colored by the chef's own travels and experiences (which he says are "very Forrest Gump-ish"), speaks to an exhilarating new generation of island cuisine.

"So many chefs jump straight to modern food without understanding the roots of this type of cooking. I was guilty of it myself," he admits. "But my grandmother always told me, 'You have to put your love into it.' That's what I'm doing now."

EACH DISH, COLORED BY
SIMEON'S OWN EXPERIENCES,
SPEAKS TO AN EXHILARATING NEW
GENERATION OF ISLAND CUISINE



HOPPIN' JUAN

SERVES 12
ACTIVE 35 min.
TOTAL 4 hours, 30 min.

PEAS

- 2 Tbsp. canola oil
- 1½ lb. oxtails
- 1½ Tbsp. kosher salt, divided
- 2 tsp. black pepper, divided
- 6 cups chicken stock
- 2 cups dried black-eyed peas, soaked overnight
- 2 cups diced yellow onions (from 2 medium onions)
- 2 cups diced carrots (from 5 medium carrots)
- 2 cups diced celery (from 4 stalks)
- ¼ cup chopped jalapeño chiles (from 2 chiles)
- 4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 5 thyme sprigs
- 3 fresh bay leaves

RICE

- 4 cups water
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper

- 1 cup uncooked jasmine rice
- ¼ cup unsalted butter, cubed

ADDITIONAL INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- ½ cup chopped scallions

1. Prepare the peas: Heat a Dutch oven over high, and add canola oil. Sprinkle oxtails evenly with ½ tablespoon of the salt and 1 teaspoon of the black pepper, and place in Dutch oven. Cook until browned on all sides, about 4 minutes per side. Remove oxtails from Dutch oven. Pour off drippings, leaving browned bits in Dutch oven, and add stock. Bring stock to a boil over high, using a wooden spoon to scrape browned bits from bottom of Dutch oven. Return oxtails to Dutch oven; reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer until tender, 1½ to 2 hours. Using a slotted spoon, transfer oxtails to a plate, and let cool slightly.

2. Add peas, onions, carrots, celery, jalapeño, garlic, thyme sprigs, and bay leaves to stock mixture; reduce heat to low, and cook, partially covered, until peas are soft, about 1 hour. Stir in remaining 1 tablespoon

salt and 1 teaspoon black pepper. While peas cook, pick oxtail meat from bones, and set aside.

3. Prepare the rice: While the peas finish cooking, preheat oven to 300°F. Bring water, salt, and cayenne pepper to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium-high. Reduce heat to medium; add rice, and stir. Simmer gently, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until rice is al dente, about 15 minutes.

4. Drain rice in a fine wire-mesh strainer, and rinse under cold water. Spread rice out on a rimmed baking sheet. Dry rice in preheated oven 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Scatter butter evenly over rice, and continue to dry, stirring every few minutes, until all excess moisture has evaporated and grains are dry and separate, about 5 more minutes.

5. Add oxtail meat and cider vinegar to peas. Using a slotted spoon, transfer peas to a large serving bowl. Add rice, and carefully toss together. (Pour enough oxtail gravy over the top to moisten the peas without making the dish too soupy, about 1 cup.) Garnish with scallions.



"MY GRANDFATHER'S GARDEN" GRILLED SALAD
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SHOYU SUGAR STEAK
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AHI POKE
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CUCUMBER CRUDITÉS
WITH SOY AIOLI AND
SESAME CRUMBLE
recipe, p. 76

HOPPIN'
JUAN

AHI POKE

SERVES 8
ACTIVE 5 min.
TOTAL 5 min.

- 2 lb. sashimi-grade ahi tuna, cut into ½-in. pieces
- ½ cup diced sweet onion (from 1 medium onion)
- 2 Tbsp. soy sauce
- ½ Tbsp. flaky sea salt (such as Maldon)
- 2 tsp. grated fresh ginger
- 2 tsp. inamona (or ground macadamia nuts)
- 1 Hawaiian (or Thai bird) chile, thinly sliced
- 2 Tbsp. chopped ogo (dried seaweed) (optional)
- ¼ cup chopped scallions

Stir together tuna, onion, soy sauce, salt, ginger, inamona, chile, and, if desired, ogo. Transfer mixture to a serving plate. Garnish with scallions, and serve immediately.

CUCUMBER CRUDITÉS WITH SOY AÏOLI AND SESAME CRUMBLE

SERVES 8
ACTIVE 5 min.
TOTAL 5 min.

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 2 Tbsp. soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp. lemon olive oil
- 1½ tsp. lemon zest (from 1 lemon)
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- 3 Tbsp. toasted sesame oil, divided
- 2 Tbsp. toasted sesame seeds
- 1 tsp. raw cane sugar
- ½ tsp. flaky sea salt (such as Maldon)
- 1 English cucumber, cut into 3-inch spears

1. Whisk together mayonnaise, soy sauce, lemon oil, lemon zest, pepper, and 2 tablespoons of the sesame oil in a small bowl until fully incorporated; transfer mixture to a serving bowl. Using a spoon, make an indentation on top of aïoli to create a cavity. Drizzle remaining 1 tablespoon sesame oil into cavity.

2. Heat a small nonstick skillet over medium. Add sesame seeds, cane sugar, and salt. Cook, stirring constantly, until sugar is toasted, about 2 minutes. Remove from pan, and sprinkle over aïoli. Serve cucumber spears with aïoli.

“MY GRANDFATHER’S GARDEN” GRILLED SALAD

SERVES 8
ACTIVE 25 min.
TOTAL 40 min.

- Kosher salt**
- 20 okra pods
 - ½ lb. Chinese long beans, trimmed
 - 1 (3-lb.) kabocha squash, peeled, seeded, and cut into wedges
 - 2 Tbsp. fish sauce
 - 2 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar
 - 1½ Tbsp. granulated sugar
 - 1 Tbsp. grated fresh ginger (from 1-in. piece)
 - 1 Tbsp. minced garlic
 - 3 Tbsp. peanut oil
 - 3 medium tomatoes
 - 1 cup chayote shoots and leaves (or another micro green)
 - 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
 - ¼ tsp. cracked black pepper

1. Fill a large pot with water, and season with kosher salt. Bring to a boil. Meanwhile, fill a bowl with ice and water, and set aside.

2. Cook okra in boiling water 30 seconds; remove and immediately plunge into ice water to stop the cooking process. Repeat with long beans. Add squash to boiling water, and cook until a fork can easily pierce flesh, about 6 minutes. Remove and let cool on a baking sheet about 15 minutes.

3. Whisk together fish sauce, vinegar, sugar, ginger, and garlic in a bowl. Slowly drizzle in peanut oil while continuing to whisk.

4. Open bottom and top vents of a charcoal grill completely. Light a charcoal chimney starter filled with briquettes. When briquettes are covered with gray ash, pour them in an even layer on bottom grate of grill. Place tomatoes on oiled grate, and grill, turning often, until completely charred, about 10 minutes. Remove from grill. Place okra, beans, and squash on grate, and grill, turning often, until slightly charred on all sides, 3 to 4 minutes. Cut okra diagonally in half, cut beans into 2-inch pieces, and cut squash into cubes. Gently toss all vegetables in a large bowl; transfer to a serving plate.

5. Roughly chop tomatoes, and place over vegetables. Spoon dressing over dish. Garnish with chayote shoots and leaves. Drizzle with extra-virgin olive oil, and finish with cracked black pepper.

SHOYU SUGAR STEAK

SERVES 8
ACTIVE 50 min.
TOTAL 1 hour, 45 min.

- ½ cup uncooked barley
- 1 cup mirin
- ½ cup sake
- 1 cup soy sauce
- ½ cup loosely packed dark brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp. sherry vinegar
- 6 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- 6 scallions, roughly chopped
- 1 (2-in.) piece fresh ginger, peeled and sliced
- 3 lb. boneless chuck roast
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt
- 1½ tsp. black pepper

1. Place barley in a spice grinder, and pulse until finely ground. Heat a nonstick saucepan over medium-high; add barley, and cook, stirring constantly, until toasted and very fragrant, about 5 minutes.

2. Reduce heat to low; add mirin and sake, and cook, stirring to loosen browned bits from bottom of pan. Add soy sauce, brown sugar, sherry vinegar, garlic, scallions, and ginger, and cook until mixture is thickened and slightly reduced, about 15 minutes. Pour mixture through a wire-mesh strainer into a bowl, discarding solids. Set sauce aside.

3. Sprinkle roast with salt. Place on a plate, and let stand 40 minutes at room temperature.

4. Open bottom and top vent of a charcoal grill completely. Light a charcoal chimney starter filled with briquettes. When briquettes are covered with gray ash, pour them onto bottom grate of grill, and then push to 1 side. Sprinkle roast with pepper, and place on oiled grate over unlit side. Cover and grill, with all vents open, flipping roast and checking internal temperature every few minutes, until a thermometer inserted into thickest portion registers 105°F, 20 to 25 minutes.

5. Transfer roast to lit side of grill over coals; brush with some of the sauce, and grill, flipping every 30 seconds to 1 minute, brushing each time with sauce, until a deep char has developed and internal temperature registers 125°F, about 10 minutes (for medium-rare) or to desired degree on doneness.

6. Transfer roast to a cutting board, and let rest at least 5 minutes. Carve and serve immediately with remaining sauce.

Simeon's Hawaiian Pantry

OGO

Also called ogonori or sea moss, this lacy, reddish-brown seaweed is the most common variety stirred into poke.

FISH SAUCE

This pungent condiment, made from fermented anchovies and salt, is Simeon's secret weapon to perk up everything from salsas to salads.

OPIHI

Limpets, or aquatic snails, are the prized gastropod of Hawai'i. When they're available, Simeon enjoys them raw or in poke.

INAMONA

A popular sushi topper, inamona is made from roasted and ground kukui nuts and salt. (Order online from paradisefarmshi.com.)

LI HING MUI

At the end of a long shift, you can often find Simeon throwing these salted, dried plums into a paloma or a Moscow mule.



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—SHELDON SIMEON

Simeon's wife and business partner, Janice, enjoys a pre-sunset family picnic near the ocean.