

# ULTIMATE BURGER: KERRY SIMON WINS “IRON CHEF AMERICA” WITH AN AMERICAN CLASSIC...



**Rocker Chef Kerry Simon** doesn't strike you as the "burger and fries" type. Given his history with Asian food and his famous Zen-like personality, you might expect a minimalist presentation of complicated flavors, such as a white, rectangular plate with skewers of ground beef with shiso leaves and ginger, served with an Asian dipping sauce, for example. But this time, it was the burger and fries (and the milkshake, of course) that had everyone saying, "Wow."

**LVFBM: What were your first thoughts when you got the assignment?**

**Kerry Simon:** I was nervous. I knew that Cat Cora is really good with Mediterranean and Greek food, so I was really shocked that I won. I didn't think I had a chance. For me that was a hard one, even though in America you can pull from a lot of different styles in terms of what to do with ground beef. I wanted to use hamburger in the full spectrum. I wanted it somewhat sophisticated - otherwise, it can turn into just a bunch of great meat. And I didn't want to do chili because then you lose the taste of 'hamburger.' And

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then of course the key part of it all is the people who will taste the food, so you have to be able to connect with the public on what you serve. I was nervous.

**LVFBM: Was there a really surprising part about the whole experience?**

**Kerry Simon:** Yes, I won.

**LVFBM: What kind of exciting things were happening behind the scenes?**

**Kerry Simon:** You get on the set and you don't know where anything is. You are really going from zilch. As far as the equipment goes, everything was there. I made the ice cream and had no problems. I was really concerned about the grinding of the meat, but that worked out well. When you have worked a lot in the kitchens you just hope your instincts are going to guide you through everything; your timing is all going to be there. And there are a lot of things to distract you: the cameras, Alton, Cora's team, and the judges in the back. When I was done, I went back to the hotel and collapsed.

**LVFBM: Did the show make an impact on your business?**

**Kerry Simon:** A huge impact - we sold a lot of hamburgers.



**LVFBM: What is it like to cook in front of the cameras?**

**Kerry Simon:** At first you are very uncomfortable doing demonstrations. It's like making an omelet for the first time - it's nerve-racking. It's really trial by error. Same thing on TV; nobody ever said, "This is what you have to do." I just did what I would normally do. I am always trying to remember who I am. It's not like I want to have my own TV show - I am a chef. That's what I do. So I'm just going to be who I am.

# ULTIMATE BURGER: KERRY SIMON WINS



**LVFBM: What is your attitude to chefs seeing TV as an instrument of success?**

**Kerry Simon:** Listen, our business is a very hard business. I think you have to be really good at what you do at your restaurant and worry about everything else second. The Food Network is shifting the programming anyway. I think it's hard for a lot of chefs to come out of the kitchen and get in front on the TV cameras. It takes training and I don't think The Food Network has the time to train anymore. Jamie Oliver is a natural - you don't see too many people like that. I don't think anybody should become a chef in hopes that they would end up on TV.

**LVFBM: What, in your opinion, makes a successful food show?**

**Kerry Simon:** I love watching chefs doing different procedures. I am always looking for new ideas, and it's a constant search. Would I do things differently than they do? I can't really judge; it's not really fair for me to say. Sometimes I look at what the chefs are doing and I think, "Who's going to prepare that at home?"

**LVFBM: What is your advice to young chefs?**

**Kerry Simon:** In my experience, you should go out and search for new things. I am always looking for the next new idea, the next thing that nobody knows about. So I think you have to search. Basically, it is an adventure.

**"Who called this burger ultimate?"  
"You did."**

## GROUND BEEF IRON CHEF AMERICA MENU –

- "Ultimate Hamburger" with cheese and tomato on a brioche, served with truffle-oil French fries and a vanilla milkshake.
- Potato ravioli, consisting of thinly sliced potato blanched in oil, filled with ground beef, fontina cheese, sun-dried tomatoes, and served with a reduced red-pepper sauce with sherry.
- Skewers of ground beef with shiso leaves and ginger, served with an Asian dipping sauce.
- Ground-beef consommé with "sparkers" (chili threads), noodles, sliced tenderloin, and Thai basi.
- Ground tartar, served with ginger, garlic, and horse-radish sauce.

