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LIVING



AT HOME WITH
SHARON & SIMON
COWELL



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PHOTO BY JIM JORDAN



A Perfect Pairing

Simon and Sharon Ourian Share Everything Including A Private Winery At Home

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Sharon Ourian appeared by the hefty front doors of her Beverly Hills home, svelte in black leggings, a button-down top, and casual Chanel lace-ups on her feet. She had just finished a workout session with her personal trainer in her home gym and was ready to start her day which, over the next several hours, would include making decisions around various businesses, overseeing a sizeable home renovation, checking in on the family's private vineyard, and picking up her three kids from school.

"I'm very organized," Sharon smiled, relaxed on a white couch in her airy, light-filled house. She brandished her phone to show how she uses the messaging app Slack to stay in touch with diverse teams of employees and associates, whether around buying a storage unit in Florida or a commercial building in Texas, or stepping in on the management of CyberActive, the online traffic school and driver's education program that was a pioneer in its field when she established it in 2000.

Sharon is one half of a quintessential Beverly Hills power couple. Her husband is prominent cosmetic dermatologist Simon Ourian, who has worked on the likes of the Kardashian and Jenner family, Lady Gaga, and many other celebrities and dignitaries from around the globe. In addition to Epione, her husband owns two international skincare lines, has invented various laser techniques and creates larger-than-life-sized sculptures that he has sold for millions of dollars to private collectors. Over the past decade, he also developed

a vineyard on their estate that he worked on for hundreds of hours to bring to fruition.

"I had a dream of having this vineyard because of my father. One year before he passed away, he visited us and told me, 'you should make a vineyard in your backyard,'" recalls Simon. "This became my life long mission. I started working on it in 2010 from the ground up. I had two mountains graded and I worked tirelessly on it over the years alongside my team of gardeners to design and implement my vision. I learned everything I could about wine and now, ten years later, we have a full functioning vineyard on our property."

The pair were introduced by a mutual friend while she was a sophomore studying creative writing at University of Southern California and he was in his final year of medical school in Michigan. Their first date lasted five hours. But their individual circumstances (such as residing in different states) precluded the relationship from moving forward at that point. Several years later fate, as it does, intervened. Sharon's father ended up becoming a patient of Simon's, having no clue about that date. When Simon noticed the address on his new patient's chart, his memory stirred. He asked Sharon's father, "does your daughter have blue eyes?" remembering that startling quality about his blind date from many years earlier. When Simon realized it was the same woman, he reached out to Sharon. The two finally reconnected at a charity event, the first time they had seen each other since that first date.

*"We ended up talking all night
and the rest is history.
We were inseparable since that moment."
—Sharon Ourian*



They married in 2007, and strive to keep their romance as fresh as it was the day they met. They schedule a weekly date night, despite having three children under the age of 11, and full workloads; Simon's practice, Epione in Beverly Hills, routinely fields 200 calls a day from potential new patients and he famously has a two-year waiting list. But for both Simon and Sharon, family comes first. They are the kind of parents who join their kids in a party bounce house, instead of sitting on the sidelines watching; their children are learning chess, are exposed to classical music, and are limited in the amount of time they spend on their electronic devices. Sharon is routinely up at dawn, getting the children ready for school, and only focusing on her day once they are out.

"But when they're back, it's all about them," she says. "We hang out, do fun stuff, do homework, and we always eat dinner together as a family for a good hour. We're completely involved in every aspect of their lives."

It's always a juggle, but Sharon is accustomed to it. She concedes that she has always been focused and driven. Her parents owned retail stores when she was growing up, and she would work there during the holidays and summers.

"That had a great influence on me wanting to become my own boss one day," she said. "I was very entrepreneurial and always thinking of ways to make money." She started buying and selling art while in college, she tried her hand at day trading, she created and got

numerous orders for a fashion line. But because she'd always been a stellar student, she decided to continue her education, making it into UCLA to study law.

It was in her final year at UCLA that Sharon had an idea to create an online traffic school, spurred by the fact that her mother had just received a ticket and loathed the idea of having to sit in a brick-and-mortar traffic school for an entire day.

"I looked for the class online but couldn't find it," she said. Sharon was already working at a test prep company, and saved the money she was earning from that to bootstrap her new business, CyberActive. She wrote the course and worked with software developers to create an online program. She began pitching it to LA-area courts and getting it approved for use in dismissing traffic violations by attending an online class instead of a live class.

But the big turning point came in 2003 when her company won a government bid to offer online driver improvement courses in Indiana. She traveled to debate a local company's protest of the award. However, Sharon managed to convince the state assembly members not to overturn the selection of her company as the sole provider of driver improvement in Indiana.

"I presented my program, they liked it and decided to use it despite local companies protesting it, and all of a sudden, I had this influx of business from Indiana overnight, with hundreds of students enrolling

each day. That immediately put me at the next level, allowing me to invest in more infrastructure, research, and development, tech, writers, and marketers."

Despite other entrants into the industry since then, CyberActive has held its own, soaring to the top of a male-dominated industry. Being a lawyer helped, instantly endowing Sharon with credibility among court systems and judges. To date, more than 10 million students across the nation have used her program. Her company is still privately owned with no outside funding and has been profitable since day one.

Since 2020 Sharon has been able to step away from the day-to-day management of CyberActive, entrusting a management company and her staff to run it, and only making the major decisions. As a consequence, she's been able to turn her attention to other things. The couple are active real estate investors, buying commercial and residential properties in California, Texas, and Florida. "My husband is mostly involved in his business and I run all aspects of our real estate portfolio," Sharon says.

Sharon is also constantly on the lookout for new and emerging tech companies to invest in, which she claims is her passion.

"I have a lot of experience building companies from the ground up," she says. "I love helping people bring their ideas to life, especially in the technology and education field."

Sharon co-manages the vineyard with her husband, housing copious bottles from a recent harvest in a glass-enclosed wine room adjacent to their formal dining room. She is an engaged philanthropist, supporting cancer research, particularly in the wake of losing her mother to ovarian cancer in 2009. She is also an advocate to other women who are seeking to make their way in the world.

"I think it's really important for women to support each other instead of competing with each other," she said. "We should always band together and push each other forward. We are born multitaskers, and having kids is more important than anything else. So my babies come first. And if you need to take time off don't be embarrassed by it and embrace it and know that we are miracle workers for being able to fulfill so many roles in business and in our family simultaneously."

As much as she has accomplished, Sharon says she is nowhere near done yet. She wants to take CyberActive global, and to continue innovating the tech that makes that entire engine run. She is also planning to expand the company's pro bono services to allow students of all backgrounds have access to CyberActive courses.

But overall, Sharon says that the advice she imparts to everyone is what she adheres to most closely herself. "You can't let fear drive you. Try new things and do what inspires you and what you are most passionate about," she says. "You have to be motivated. You have to persevere so you never look back and say I should have done this or that. When you are 80, you will never regret doing something and failing but you will regret not doing something because you were afraid of failure." ■

