



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP
SPEECH AT THE LAUNCH OF THE NEW AUSTRALIAN CUISINE
PROMOTION, NEW OTANI HOTEL, TOKYO, 25 MAY 1995**

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It's a very great pleasure to be here among Australian and Japanese friends to sample a truly unique culinary feast. This in part, or most of it, has been accomplished by Mr Neil Perry, a famous Australian chef from Sydney, who is demonstrating to you the cuisine, or new cuisine, of Australia. You know that Australia is a very multicultural country, and that in the post-War years it has changed dramatically so that one of our great strengths now is that multiculturalism and it's reflected in this food we eat, the interesting lives we lead, and the interesting change in Australia's cuisine. We are giving you a sample of some of this tonight.

Australia is, environmentally, a very clean country, and the food is commensurably clean. So we think one of our strengths is our capacity to grow food, to produce food, and to process food. It is now Australia's largest manufacturing industry, and we expect it to get larger, and to treble its exports by the year 2000.

The other feature which we think is a strength for Australia is that our food grows in the Japanese off-season, and it is eminently suitable for use in traditional Japanese cuisine.

You might know that Australians have been very conscious of their health over the last 20 years, and much more conscious of their diet, and as Japan and Japanese people traditionally have a low-fat diet, the food which Australia produces is increasingly at that end of the spectrum. I think we don't want to clog our arteries, and we don't want to clog yours.

We think that our food can be used as part of Japanese cuisine, and we are increasingly moving towards the cuisine and culture of our region in food, such as Thai, Chinese - all the varieties of the Chinese cooking - Malaysian,

and of course, Japanese. And let me assure the audience, I have taken many a decision over a sashimi and sushi in my day.

I think Australians have a much closer awareness of the culinary interests of the region, and especially Japan. So, we do honestly believe that the kinds of foods, and varieties of food Australia produces, can suit not only traditional cuisine in Japan, but also those innovations which you as a community are moving towards, and which we think we can encourage you in.

One of the things we feel most proud about, one of the beverages we feel most proud about, is of course, Australian wine. And Australian wine is relatively inexpensive by world standards, and of a very high quality, so we will see more of it drunk here. And we are also seeing other fresh, cleaner live products - like abalone, salmon, lobsters, asparagus, mango's, and among the processed foods we are exporting are Australian made noodles, like soba, udon and kamaboko.

(inaudible)...supplier of foodstuffs to Japan, and our exports are growing at about 10% a year. We are Japan's largest supplier of dairy products, we supply about one-fifth of Japan's imports of beef, and we are in 1993 - just a couple of years ago - 70% of Japan's overseas investment in food processing went to Australia. So, food is the fastest growing area of our trade with Japan, and we think we can substantially enlarge it.

Of course, the best thing about exporting food is not simply about trade dollars, it is really - as we all know - about cultural exchange. And whenever we eat with people from other countries, it is always a cultural exchange, and I think this campaign we are launching tonight is a perfect illustration of the cultural dimensions of food.

Robert Morley, a British raconteur, once said no man is lonely eating a bowl of spaghetti. Well, I would like to say that for my part, I have the same sense of communion with a plate of sashimi.

So, food is a cultural matter, as well as a business matter. So, I would like tonight to particularly thank Mr Toyoshima, the Chairman of JETRO, for his participation in this launch, and the opening of the Australian Business Centre. Let me again thank Neil Perry for coming to Japan and preparing this food tonight - we are all very much in his debt. Could I also welcome the 6 Japanese food writers who are heading off on a gourmet tour of Australia, and say that it's a great pleasure for us that so many of you have come along to be involved in this launch of the New Australian Cuisine. So it is now my pleasure to launch the New Australian Cuisine campaign.

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