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PRIME MINISTER

**ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP
NEW AUSTRALIAN CUISINE LAUNCH
THURSDAY 25 MAY 1995**

It is a great pleasure to be here, among Australian and Japanese friends, to sample a truly unique culinary feast.

The "New Australian Cuisine" campaign reflects a number of important elements in the modern Australia-Japan relationship.

At one level it is about contemporary Australian taste. At another it is about our largest manufacturing industry.

In a sense, food is a touchstone of the change in Australia - not abandoning traditional culture or traditional industries, but modifying them, adapting them, adding value to them.

The change in taste and style is increasingly towards the cultures of our region - Thai, Chinese, Malaysian, and of course Japanese.

Neil Perry who has prepared this selection today is one of a number of leading Australian chefs who blend a Japanese influence into Australian food.

And food - or food processing - is Australia's largest manufacturing industry. It will get larger - we expect it to treble its exports by the year 2000.

Japan is a priority market and one of the key investors in the industry.

In 1993, 70 per cent of Japan's overseas investment in food processing went to Australia.

For Australia's part, we are the third largest supplier of foodstuffs to Japan, and exports are growing at a rate of 10.5 per cent.

Australia is Japan's largest supplier of dairy products. We supply one fifth of Japan's imports of beef.

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Food is the fastest growing area of our trade with Japan - and as I said earlier today the potential is there to dramatically enlarge it.

Australian food is the product of a clean environment. It is fresh and pure, it grows in the Japanese off-season and it is eminently suitable for use in traditional Japanese cuisine.

Because Australia is one of the most efficient agriculture producers in the world, Australian food is also cheap. And so, I might add, is the wine. And the wine is as good as the food - which is to say as good as any to be got.

These days we export less dried, canned and frozen food products and more fresh, clean and live - like abalone, lobsters and salmon and asparagus and mangoes. Among the processed foods we export are Australian-made noodles like soba, udon and kamaboko.

We see enormous potential in the Australian food growing and food processing industry, and the trade with Japan at once provides the greatest opportunity and the best measure of success.

Food of course, is not just about trade dollars - it is also a cultural exchange. It is a means - perhaps the best means - of getting to know each other. Maybe even getting to know ourselves: "No man is lonely eating a bowl of spaghetti", Robert Morley once said. I have the same sense of communion with a plate of sashimi.

This campaign we are launching tonight is a perfect illustration of the cultural dimensions of food.

Let me welcome the six Japanese food writers who are heading off on a gourmet tour of Australia. I wish you a very enjoyable and productive visit - as I do the Japanese chefs, representatives of cooking schools and other food industry leaders who will follow the food writers.

Once again, let me say thank you to Neil Perry for coming to Japan and preparing this food tonight.

And thank you also Mr Toyoshima, Chairman of JETRO for his participation in this launch and the opening of the Australia Business Centre.

We greatly appreciate JETRO's support.

Now it is my pleasure to launch the New Australian Cuisine campaign



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