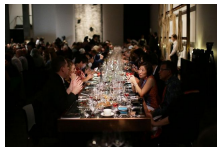


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HD **Australia Invites the World to Dinner; A Six-Hour Feast in Tasmania for Global Food Elites**
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It was a feast for the ages.

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The world's food elite gathered in Tasmania last week for one of the most lavish meals in Australia's history, designed to convince international visitors that the country is one of the world's best eating destinations.

The "Invite the World to Dinner" event, part of a 40-**million**-Australian-dollar (US\$35 **million**) campaign by the government agency Tourism Australia, brought in guests from more than 16 countries to experience a meal prepared by three of Australia's best chefs: Peter Gilmore and Neil Perry from, respectively, Quay and Rockpool in Sydney, and Ben Shewry from Melbourne's Attica.



Two hundred and fifty diners including heavy-hitters of the Australian food scene and 86 international "cultural influencers," including top chefs and restaurateurs Alice Waters (Chez Panisse, Berkeley, Calif.), Heston Blumenthal (the Fat Duck, U.K.) Davide Scabin (Combal.Zero, Italy) and Andre Chiang (Restaurant Andre, Singapore); food writers A.A. Gill (U.K.) and Andrea Petrini (France); and celebrities such as Indian chef Sanjeev Kapoor, actor Takuro Tatsumi of Japan and **Chinese** actress Chen Shu.

Instead of being seated under a canopy of stars next to Uluru in Australia's red-desert center or floating above the Great Barrier Reef surrounded by sea and sun, the guests found themselves dressing for dinner in Hobart, one of the country's least-visited capitals. They could hardly have missed the message. This is the Australia few foreigners ever see.

The question of what defines Australian food has been asked before, including at a dinner last year in Sydney that brought together a **group** of chefs from both home and abroad and tasked each of them with [creating a single dish of Australian cuisine](#).

But the bash in Tasmania took more than a hundred kitchen staff, sommeliers and servers two days to create 16 distinct dishes, comprising four “chapters” with more than two dozen matching Australian wines, delivered over the course of a six-hour meal.



Each chapter was served in a different location, beginning at Hobart’s Franklin Wharf, the city’s main dock for fishing vessels. Guests then were transported by speedboat to the Glenorchy Art and Sculpture Park (known as GASP!) and again by ferry to the Museum of Old and New Art, or MONA, a sprawling museum owned by Australian art collector and gambler David Walsh.

But for all the impressive logistics behind the dinner, the event’s greatest challenge was the food itself. Australian cuisine draws from a variety of cultures and its breadth has long defied definition.

Australian chefs head internationally acclaimed restaurants all over the world, from Brett Graham at the Ledbury in London to David Thomson of Nahm in Bangkok, but few serve food that could be categorized as Australian.

The challenge before Messrs. Gilmore, Perry and Shewry was more than just to put on a memorable meal—it was also to help define Australian cuisine to a global audience. Their menu displayed clear themes.

Strong on seafood from cold southern Australian waters and unique native ingredients, the menu also showed a dominant Asian influence, despite none of the chefs being of Asian heritage.

The first chapter of the meal began in cocktail-party fashion, with a variety of native oysters from around the country, and the second was a hat-tip to the Australian barbecue.

Dishes like Tasmanian lobster roasted with kombu **butter**, roasted wallaby-tail broth, and South Australian King George whiting grilled in paperbark were all cooked over open coals and served outdoors. It was an exciting starting point, and the large open fire pits provided welcome warmth in Tasmania’s cold and wild weather.

The third and fourth chapters took place at MONA, where the three chefs first delivered more substantial courses to the guests, all seated at a single giant, winding dining table in the shape of a snake.



Mr. Shewry’s salted red kangaroo tartare with bunya nut (a native Australian pine cone the size of a basketball) was nuanced and exotic, even for the Australians present. Mr. Gilmore’s confit pork jowl with Tasmanian blacklip abalone, koji, shiitake, malted grains and seaweed was elegant and textured, and Mr. Perry’s impeccable Blackmore wagyu sirloin was accented with a vibrant red curry of oxtail and tea-smoked oyster.

The fourth chapter followed the seated courses, and guests were invited to wander into the lower reaches of the museum to discover stations serving world-beating Tasmanian whiskeys and Australian cheeses, to forage dessert eggs from nests placed in indoor trees,

and to sample other desserts of lychee with vanilla and rose, and mango with pandan and coconut.

The influence of Asian flavors has been a feature of Australian cuisine for the past few decades, but never has it been on display so clearly and so completely to such an influential audience.

In 2013, Australia's main tourism body conducted surveys in 15 key foreign markets and found that only 26% of people who had not visited Australia considered it to have good food and **wine**. After visiting, that number grew to 60%, second only to France.

Food tourism was a A\$4.1 **billion** (US\$3.6 **billion**) industry for Australia in 2013, a figure that Tourism Australia hopes to raise by nearly a **billion** dollars for the 12 months ending June 2015.

While the success of Tourism Australia's campaign is likely to be measured by the overseas revenue it attracts, its true and longer-lasting effect may be much more subtle: a **stake** in the ground on the road to defining one of the world's most multicultural cuisines, and a shift in the conversation around what Australian food and **wine** has to offer.

Adam Liaw is a food writer and television presenter based in Sydney. He has written three cookbooks on Asian cuisine, and his food and travel television series, "Destination Flavour," is in its fourth season.

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| ART | Tourism Australia The Museum of Old and New Art in Tasmania was one of the sites for the 'Invite the World to Dinner' event on Nov. 14. Tourism Australia From left, chefs Neil Perry, Peter Gilmore and Ben Shewry. Tourism Australia Chefs Neil Perry, left, and Peter Gilmore, center, prepare the feast. Tourism Australia Chef Peter Gilmore's smoked and confit pig jowl, blacklip abalone, koji, fermented grains, shiitake and seaweed. |
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