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 HD **Australian chefs have no reservations**
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EXCLUSIVE AUSTRALIAN restaurateurs are hopeful the free-trade agreement will make operating in **China** a piece of cake, with lower prices thanks to tariff cuts encouraging more **Chinese** diners to part with their hard-earned yuan in exchange for the best of Aussie food and **wine**.

As part of the long-awaited trade deal finalised in Canberra this week, the **Chinese** government will allow Australian-owned hotels and restaurants to open across the country. **Chinese**-born Australian James Sing has operated the Kakadu Restaurant in Shanghai for the past seven years and has another outlet due to open in the next few months.

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He said running Western-style restaurants in **China** was tough but he hoped the FTA would speed up the approval and development processes. "With our new restaurant, we were told that it would take two months to get ... (a licence) but now it's taken about four months," he said. "The **Chinese** government has said they wanted to speed up that process but it just hasn't happened." Luke Mangan said the timing of the FTA couldn't be better. He flew home to Sydney on Thursday after meetings in **Hong Kong** and Shanghai to expand his Salt **brand** of restaurants. "We're looking at both markets, but it depends on the deal and the location," said Mr Mangan, who has stakes in restaurants in Jakarta, Bali, Singapore, Tokyo and the Maldives.

"But for our model, which is all about showcasing Australian produce and **wine** in Asia, this agreement could be really great." Mr Mangan, who has a Tokyo-based backer, said Asia was the "future of our **business**, given the hurdles in Australia". "Our model is to go into new buildings or developments. I have no preference at this stage; it might be Shanghai, **Hong Kong** or both. It depends on the location, and the vibe." Rockpool's Neil Perry said that while he wasn't across the detail of how the FTA might create opportunities in **China**, "I'd be very open to the right idea." He said that while there had been approaches to his **group** in the past, "it's as much about who's in power at the time and getting the right partners on the ground".

In Shanghai, Mr Sing said he was confident that reduced tariffs on meat and **wine** would mean lower prices, which would attract more **Chinese** diners. Under the FTA, the 14 per cent tariff on bottled **wine** will be phased out over four years and beef taxes of 12 to 25 per cent will be cut over nine years.

"I think the biggest thing for my **business** will hopefully be cheaper export prices of beef and lamb," Mr Sing said.

"Also for **wine**, if the distributors pass on the lower prices, which I'm pretty sure they will because that is a very competitive **business**, that is going to make things a lot better." He said he hoped Australia and **China** could come to an agreement on the lifting of a ban on the **sale** of kangaroo meat.

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