

Dinner Speech

**Presented by HE Mr YAMAGAMI Shingo, Ambassador of Japan to Australia
Hunter Valley, 31st January 2022**

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm very grateful to have been invited here to the Hunter Valley, one of Australia's best known and oldest wine regions.

Having heard about the delights of the Hunter even before I set foot in Australia, I had hoped I could come earlier.

Unfortunately, the pandemic had other plans.

But tonight, finally, my long-held dream of seeing the region for myself comes true.

This year began with a momentous signal of flourishing Japan-Australia relations: a Leader's Meeting between Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Morrison.

Regarding this, I have a small national secret to share with you.

I was in fact able to join this meeting as a member of team Australia.

Prime Minister Morrison conducted the virtual meeting in a secure room, in Parliament House in Canberra.

In a sign of the deep trust our nations share, I was invited to participate from that same, very, very small room.

And that shows how far our bilateral relationship has come.

Since arriving in Australia over a year ago, I have made it one of my priorities to promote Japan as major destination for Aussie wine.

Following the unprecedented trade difficulties you are facing, I really wanted to encourage local winemakers. So, during my official visits to each State and Territory, I have tried to outline the great potential of high-quality Aussie wine in Japan.

Unfortunately, after enthusing about the Barossa during a speech in Adelaide, one particular Hunter winery owner unexpectedly sent me a very stern letter.

So I'd like to set the record straight.

I'm here to be a cheerleader for *all* Aussie wine, with no intention whatsoever to participate in the debate about which region is the best.

In fact, what I'd really like to see is a future in which that debate takes place in Japan between everyday people who know and love the different tastes of different Aussie wine regions.

That will mean that Aussie wine has won the hearts of consumers to such a degree that the competition is no longer between Australia and countries like Chile or France.

Currently in Japan, in terms of imported wines, the first-tier countries are, in order, Chile, France and Italy.

Even in the second-tier countries, Australia's name is not there.

Second tier countries include the United States and Spain.

What's going on here?

I'm enraged!

I have enjoyed every kind of tasty Australian wine since my arrival here about a year ago.

So what is going on here?

I'd like to change this landscape, with the help of Mike Newman in Tokyo.

So, until that day arrives, please continue to help me to understand any hurdles you face in getting your wines into the bellies of Japanese wine-lovers.

And please don't tell anyone in the Barossa I said the Hunter was one of Australia's best regions.

Thank you.