

Speech by Ambassador YAMAGAMI Shingo on the occasion of An Evening with a Sake Master, Wednesday 15 March 2023

I would like to thank you all for coming.

I am delighted to see so many representatives from the Canberra business community, including top hotels, bars and restaurants.

Indeed, I hope the Canberra nightlife is not suffering as a result of your being here tonight.

I have invited all of you to enjoy something that draws together Japanese and Australians alike...

Decent grog.

There are three reasons why tonight's event is particularly important.

Firstly, the Australian market for Japanese sake is steadily expanding.

The amount of sake imported by Australia in 2022 was a little over 800,000 litres, which could just about fill up Manuka Pool.

And, as they say, quality over quantity – and I am so delighted to see the smorgasbord of premium sake available in Canberra.

But, as a nation full of lovers of *eau de vie*, I know you can do better.

Australia is number 8 in the world for sake consumption.

To some, this may not sound bad, but why don't we aim for even greater heights.

Filling up Lake Burley Griffin, for example.

Secondly, whenever I invite guests to this residence for a meal, we always serve a small glass of quality sake to make a toast.

On a few occasions, I have been asked "shouldn't we warm it up?"

To put this into a local context, this is like using Penfolds Grange to make a Sangria.

So tonight, I hope that we can clear up some of these misunderstandings, and that all of you can learn the best way to enjoy premium sake.

Finally, tonight's sake represents more than just a good drop.

Mr Karahashi, tonight's sake master, grew up in the beautiful countryside of Fukushima, where he is now President of Homare Sake Brewery.

There must be something in the water there – and, no, I'm not talking about how important water is for the sake brewing process.

Because not only is Mr Karahashi a successful President, but his sister Yumi-san is a very popular TV presenter who you might see on Homare's promotional material.

For many years, Mr Karahashi has worked tirelessly to promote sake internationally, particularly that of his home prefecture, Fukushima.

I know that you have all heard about Fukushima.

But I wish the reason for its fame was its delicious sake, instead of the terrible events that happened exactly 12 years ago.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Australia for its generous support, which has been a source of strength for the region.

But there are still many challenges facing Fukushima, such as import restrictions by Japan's neighbouring countries on local products.

The discharge of treated water currently stored in Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Station is also a significant challenge. We are determined to work with the IAEA to ensure that the discharge is verifiably safe and meets international standards.

Despite these challenges, Fukushima is well on its way to recovery.

And it is my hope that the sake industry will be one of the key pillars supporting it.

Mr Karahashi's presence here tonight is proof of this – and of the close bond between Japan and Australia.

So, Karahashi-san, thank you very much for making the long journey to

Canberra.

I hope you feel very much at home here.

If you are missing Fukushima, and its dialect, please feel free to talk to our Fukushima-born butler, Yuriko-san.

What is more, tonight Chef OGATA has prepared some wonderful bites which will further enhance the taste of premium sake.

So please enjoy everything we have prepared for this special event tonight, and I hope you are inspired to dive even deeper into the world of sake.

Thank you.