



FOOD, NATURE AND PEOPLE...  
LET'S BE OPEN

BOYS BE AMBITIOUS!

1

MASUYA GROUP CEO  
KEN SADAMATSU

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER 1 FOOD

### Author's Profile

**Ken Sadamatsu**

Managing Director of Masuya Group

Date of Birth: 5th Dec 1961

Origin: Matsuyama City, Ehime Prefecture, Japan

Ken arrived in Australia as a working holiday maker in 1984 and migrated to Australia in 1985.

Currently managing "Musashi", "Makoto" and "Masuya" restaurants in the Sydney city.

### PART 1

MY YOUTH OF MISFORTUNE,  
FAILURE, FRUSTRATION AND RISE

### PART 2

THE CURRY DISH OF THE WORLD  
AND MY CURRY AND RICE

### PART 3

IN NOVEMBER 1993, MASUYA RESTAURANT  
ESTABLISHED

### PART 4

20TH OF DECEMBER, 1999, MAKOTO

PART1

## MY YOUTH OF MISFORTUNE, FAILURE, FRUSTRATION AND RISE

IF I HAD A CHOICE OF TEN DIFFERENT ROADS IN LIFE TO WALK, AND EACH ROAD WOULD LEAD TO TEN MORE DIFFERENT ROADS, AND EACH ONE OF THESE ROADS WOULD LEAD TO ANOTHER TEN, NOW IMAGINE IF THIS PATTERN IS NEVER ENDING. YOUR POTENTIAL IN LIFE WOULD BE UNLIMITED. THE WORLD IS MY STAGE AND I WAS DREAMING I WOULD CHALLENGE THE LIMITS OF MY ABILITY AND SUCCEEDING.

THERE were no problems at all back in my high school days in Matsuyama City, Ehime Prefecture in Japan. Even though I was falling behind in my classes it didn't bother me. Reading books on politics and history was my only hobby. Despite this, I couldn't mentally keep up with the emphasis and pressure of university entrance so I signed on with my father's steel-frame construction company. There were about eight employees when I started working there. This was my first work experience and because I came here straight out of high school, I didn't take this job seriously. However my life changed because of the unexpected death of my father. I decided myself to take upon the responsibilities of the company even though I was young and had no experience at all.

Yet I started running the company, and soon realized there was no central force where my father used to occupy and the business had collapsed and I was forced to close the company. I didn't say any last words to the employees who had dedicated themselves tirelessly to the company day and night, I just left and disappeared. I often reminisce about the workers and their families and what had happened. This has turned out to be a lifelong trauma for me.

### **From Working Holiday Maker to Permanent Resident**

I remember that the one-way ticket with Singapore Airlines from

Japan to Australia cost about ¥120,000 (approx. AU\$700) at that time. This was just before the boom of Japanese tourists to Australia. Those days almost all the Japanese people working at duty-free shops and a few souvenir shops in Sydney were permanent residents. There were very few jobs available for Japanese working holiday makers, pretty much the only job available were in Japanese restaurants. Getting a job was so hard and competitive, that I didn't care about pay as long as I could get a job.

Before long, I got a part-time job at "Sushi House" in North Sydney as a waiter, which was my first wait job in my life. The Australian accent was really hard to catch and this caused many problems for me, for example I couldn't tell the difference between "Bill" and "Beer" and I would always bother Hiroko, a co-waitress to help me understand. After that, I changed jobs and found work in a local fish & chips shop, but I got sick of the daily monotonous work and quit again.

Later on I started looking for a job again. For over two weeks I just walked into about 200 shops without appointments around North Sydney and Kings Cross and asked for a job. The only one who took a chance in me and gave me a job was Tokuko-san from the Blue Trout Restaurant. I started as a kitchen hand there where I used kitchen knives for the first time and also learnt cooking. She left me her Bento-Shop business, which sold small

Japanese lunch boxes, in North Sydney and I worked there for six months, managing all aspects of the business including all shop expenses.

A memory at Blue Trout... I didn't eat pork until 22 years old and one day I cooked Tonkatsu (deep-fried crumbed pork) for the staff meals, I put it into my mouth and I thought how delicious!! I was so surprised and wondered why I couldn't eat pork in Japan. Everyday was so busy, I had no Australian friends, I couldn't improve my English and couldn't save any money for a trip either. Eventually I was forced to go back to Japan. At first I relied on my relatives in Tokyo to help me find employment but Tokyo didn't offer any chances for employment and I had to go back into the deep mountains of mandarins in Ehime.

A month later, I remembered from my time in Australia, that Japanese curries had sold really well at the take away Bento Shop so I planned to open my own Japanese curry shop in Australia. I started working on a permanent residency acquisition to return to Australia and with a lot of help from Tokuko-san of Blue Trout, I returned to Australia when I was 23. Soon after I was very lucky to accidentally meet Mr Ogawa, who was the second top chef at Hyatt Hotel and my years of chef training had begun.

### **Events at the Hyatt Hotel**

WHEN I started working at the Hyatt Hotel I didn't speak English



Training at the Hyatt Hotel

like I do now. I recall greeting fellow staff at the hotel on the first day by saying “How do you do?”, and this continued into the week, and then one day a Korean chef who speaks Japanese told me “you can say How are you? if you want to greet everyday”. Everyone spoke like “@&c% you, stupid !”, I didn't understand at all what they were saying because of the slang.

Also learning the names of ingredients and dishes in English was very difficult. I knew very few words like pepper, parsley and spaghetti but that's all. Adding to this, I had to learn how to cook

using hundreds of ingredients that the hotel carried. For the first six months, I would have headaches everyday, because of these English problems and my lack of cooking skills.

On food, I found big differences between the tastes of Japanese and Australians when I was working there. For example, for tomato and fresh basil spaghetti, Australian chefs don't use salt and pepper very much, but to me as a Japanese, the amount of salt and pepper used by Australians isn't strong enough and needs adding to.

“Is this really delicious...?” I wonder to myself.

If too much salt and pepper is added the delicate flavour and taste of the basil and tomato will be spoiled and also I'm not sure if it goes with white wine well. The wine and the meal have to not only be a good combination but also compliment each other by bringing out the best qualities of the wine and the meal. Neither one should have a taste that would overpower the other.

Hotels work for 24 hours. So the kitchen in the hotel was on duty for 24 hours too, for room service and breakfast in the early morning. Also the preparation of the a la carte menu was needed to be done. Through this work I was able to learn many dishes from around the world. Top chefs came from Europe, to change the restaurant's menu, this was a great experience for me to work with such great chefs. What I was surprised with was there were wonderful young chefs at the hotel. They had very strong opinions and were very stubborn about their thoughts and ideas, but at the



Researching Japanese Curry

same time they were hard workers. Even in their break time or day off, I saw them studying cooking. I didn't take even one day off during my two years at the hotel. I thought that I was very reliable because I would always fill in for other chefs who got sick, but actually I didn't have much of a social life and work was the only thing in my life.

One morning everyone in the kitchen was eagerly listening to a radio program about food critics who secretly went around hotels across Sydney and evaluated their breakfast meals. And in the program my Egg Benedict was granted first place! Everybody at the hotel praised my achievements; Korean, Chinese, Filipino, Australian, the staff of the hotel was very multicultural, also there was a manly female chef and funny gay waiter! Because the hotel staff treated me with high regard and great importance, I came to like Australia.

### **Opening of the Curry Restaurant**

I resigned from the hotel after 2 years because of the stress from management and the limit of its command of English. I researched Japanese curry during my work at the Hyatt Hotel. I studied flour, how to make stock, and methods of preparation of spices... I also tried all the canned curries of the famous hotels in Japan. I had an overload of information but I continued to research by visiting spice



Invited friends for a sampling party of curry and heard comments

companies through the Yellow Pages, a business phone book.

Near the end of my time at Hyatt Hotel, I received contact from Mr Higuchi, the manager of a steak hamburger restaurant in Matsuyama City where I used to work, he needed my help in researching real estate in Queensland, for a friend of his, Mr Ochi. Later on, Mr Higuchi and Mr Ochi came to Australia and I told them about my project of opening a curry shop and asked them to help me by investing in my plan. I told them “I will absolutely succeed” with great passion and enthusiasm.

I wondered to myself... What Japanese curry taste would everybody like? How much would it all cost? ... I had Mr Higuchi and Mr Ochi try some of my curry at my apartment and spoke to them about my business plan based on the information I had collected.

I was only 25 years old, I had no guarantors, although my mother could have been a guarantor, I didn't want to bother and worry her. In spite of this, Mr Higuchi became a guarantor himself and lent me ¥10 million (approx. AU\$56,000).

I declared repeatedly that I would risk my life to make the shop successful. At that time Mr Higuchi was 35 and now I'm 42. It is thanks to Mr Higuchi, a teacher of life and a teacher of the restaurant business, that I'm here now.

Now, in the next part I will write about my five years of challenge, sufferings and frustration after opening my curry restaurant. Also I will introduce the difference in food cultures through “Curry Rice” from different countries.

That's all for this month. Did you enjoy?

PART2

## THE CURRY DISH OF THE WORLD AND MY CURRY AND RICE

IN THE LAST CHAPTER, I TALKED ABOUT MY LIFE BEGINNING FROM WHEN I WAS A WORKING HOLIDAY MAKER TO ATTAINING MY PERMANENT VISA, MY TIME AT THE HYATT HOTEL AND THE DECISION OF OPENING MY CURRY RESTAURANT WHEN I WAS 25. IN THIS PART OF CHAPTER 1 BASED ON THE THEME OF FOOD, I AM GOING TO TALK ABOUT MY PROGRESS IN 5 YEARS AFTER THE OPENING OF MY CURRY RESTAURANT, ALONG WITH THIS I WILL INTRODUCE THE DIFFERENCES OF FOOD CULTURE IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES IN TERMS OF CURRY.

WOULD you think that Australians would like House Vermont Curry which contains apples and honey as well? Now, add Karaage (deep-fried chicken) or beef cutlet or deep-fired crumbed king prawn on top, now how does it sound? I was sure that it would sell well, that's why I took a chance on curry... now, I am able to tell which nationalities prefer which curry from the experience that I have gained. Thai, Malaysian and Indian people would like Japanese curry. Australians say that when they have curry with wine at dinner, Thai or Indian curry would suit wine better than its Japanese counterpart. So what is "the universal curry" like...?

By the way, as a Japanese, which one would you prefer, Japanese BBQ, where the meat is not marinated, or Korean BBQ, where the meat is marinated? 99% of Japanese people who were asked this question say they would prefer the Japanese style. But Korean people say that their style is more delicious. Working holiday makers often think that Tako-yaki (grilled dumplings with octopus) and Okonomi-yaki (Japanese pancakes) would sell very well in Australia, but Australians prefer the texture and taste of pizza. Through managing "Musashi" restaurant I found out that the sauce for Okonomi-yaki was a bit too sour for Australians but in contrast to this some found it too sweet, especially for Filipinos and Chinese. However Okonomi-yaki might be a good idea since no one has started this yet in Australia. How about just try this idea first and thinking further later on ? Boys be ambitious!



The Curry and Rice received high evaluation in local papers

Now, over 5 years, a couple of nights a week I would cook my Curry and Rice after dinner time, at about 11 pm. I would peel 25 kilos of onions, slice and saute them with an Indian fat called Ghi, for two hours until they turned golden. Add the stock, which was experimented with for many times, and spices and start simmering the curry at about 2 in the morning. While the curry was simmering, add a Japanese curry roux and then just keep stirring again and again, so that the bottom of pot would not get burnt. These process would continue until 5 o'clock in the morning.

However, it was only once that I thought that this curry was delicious during my two years of research and the first five years of the restaurant. How come that curry was nice? Did a miracle happen? As you can see it is very difficult to maintain a real genuine taste at a high standard continuously.

Although my shop was in a style of a restaurant, there were no great varieties of food like sushi or sashimi, I just battled with an original curry menu. Considering from now on, I didn't have neither enough capability as a chef nor any skills as a manager. All I had was just an unusual passion and a mission to do well.

### **Agony and Frustration**

1st of July, 1987, I, my soon-to-be wife Echiko and friends of mine who were working holiday makers finally opened the shop at no.22 Glebe Point Road, near Sydney University. We did

everything ourselves from painting the house and fixing the front and back yards. I bought the shop for AU\$55,000 from a Thai lady. The shop had neon on the sides and there were 70 seats all together including 7 tables at the backyard and 40 seats inside the restaurant. The shop was open 7 days a week and I was the only chef there with 1 to 2 kitchen hands to help so I could not ever get sick or injured.

In spite of all our hard work and the grand opening of the restaurant, on the 7th of July, the day of Tanabata (the Star Festival), we actually had zero customers, which is a day I will never forget in my life. I sat down in the kitchen and was just at a loss, thinking about the long-term leasing contract for the restaurant and also about my funds that was dangerously running short. Even if I fled at night, as long as I'm in Australia I had to continue paying rent for the shop. Honestly I was troubled... I tried improving everyday because if today is the same as yesterday then the shop would go bankrupt. Looking at the reservations and sales books of those days, I only had sales that were worth about 400 dollars a day.

However, a year later, my improvements and hard work would be rewarded. My sales had rose to about 700 dollars a day which could be considered as 17 dollars per customer.

Even with our increase in sales, I and my wife still didn't make

enough to earn a salary because of our financial obligations for the business. But the restaurant began to turn upwards further.

When I turned 28, I and Echiko got married and held a small wedding in her home town, where every surface would be beautifully covered with snow in winter, of Hachiryu Town in Akita prefecture. After that we travelled to Los Angeles and inspected a successful curry shop which belonged to the House Foods Corporation.

One Sunday morning, expecting it would be a quiet day, customers were continuously calling to make reservations. The phone was off the hook the whole day, and actually many people were queuing outside the shop waiting to dine. The following day, my Australian friend told me that my shop was in the Sydney Morning Herald with a 4 star rating. I was shocked, I was like "no way...?!" but Yes, it was way.

I was excited I would join one of those prosperous restaurants but... Bad luck had visited me after a period of good luck, - the Australian economy went into a recession. Major banks and real estate companies fell into a bankruptcy crisis around 1989. I had lots of regular customers from the Grace Brothers located in Broadway Shopping Centre, but it was shut down because of this economic recession. Finally, I had a good start to a business but I was totally distraught again about my financial situation. So I asked Mr Higuchi, who had invested in my curry shop, for advice



Catering business won popularity but...

but what he advised me was to sell the shop. "I won't sell my shop for my life!!" I spat out and I hung up on him. After that, I didn't make contact with him for a long time. It was my policy in life that once I decided to begin something, I would see it through to the end, even if it meant risking my life. After this incident, an idea had arose in my mind to begin a catering enterprise taking advantage of the facilities of my restaurant.

### Catering Business Endeavour! But Failure...

I had the facilities for cooking and I still could afford to pay rent for the house. The concept for my catering business was "Restaurant Meal at Work!".

We would fax weekly menus to various offices. These menus would have various Bento lunch boxes which were priced from \$3.80 to \$8.80, and then would deliver orders to the offices at the appointed time. I planned a totally new menu which had contained meals such as the Original Snapper Bento, Salmon Egg Bento, Bakudan-Onigiri (rice ball) Bento, Picnic Bento and National Ekiben Festival (lunch box sold at stations). I and a staff of six people would make over 100 boxes a day beginning at 5:30 in the morning. I had a guarantee with my delivery, it was that if your delivery is more than 15 minutes late it would be free. I didn't let the staff take any days off even if they were to fall sick. However, I only made a profit of about 70 cents per box. At that time, my first daughter Chieri was born. I used to deliver Bentos holding her in my left arm and the steering wheel with my right hand. After delivering the orders I would work in the restaurant during dinner hours. Since I didn't have sufficient equipment, I cooked rice in five pots. I often had complaints from various kinds of customers such as sightseeing companies and gourmets. I had to deal with days of apologies and an increase demand for catering at parties.



The curry restaurant on Glebe Point Road. Here was my starting point

However near the end of December, one year after starting the catering business, I was involved in a car accident when I was delivering the New Year's Eve Bento with Zenzai (sweet red beans with rice cakes). Looking at the scattered Zenzai and Bento boxes in the car which could no longer be delivered to their customers I realised that this venture was over and I decided myself to close my restaurant and along with this the catering business. To be honest, I was sick of the restaurant business that can make little profit in spite of so much hard work.

### An 18 Month Journey after the Closing then the Establishment of Masuya

THE knowledge from my experience of the catering business had led me catering up to 7,000 meals for the Sydney Olympics and repeated orders of 500 lunches for Japanese tourists.

After closing my restaurant I considered opening curry shops in Cairns and the Gold Coast but it was never realised, and I started working at Jordan's Seafood Restaurant in Darling Harbour. I wanted to work where Japanese people are not working, like the Hyatt Hotel. Jordan's was able to seat 500 people and I was in charge of the Sushi bar with the hourly pay of \$10. However, I proposed a new menu and after one year I was appointed head of the appetizer and desserts section. I was given ten assistants and I remember I got paid about \$1,500 a week. At Jordan's, I learnt salmon dishes that were nicer than just salmon Sashimi such as salmon Ceviche and salmon Gravalax. They would always devise the menu to match red wine which is unusual because the menu is seafood focused.

In order to make food and wine match, various kinds of herbs such as dill, basil and rosemary were used. Fruits were also cooked or dressed to be added to the meal as a garnish. Using these methods the food and wine would suit perfectly. However interestingly, Australians don't keep boiled lobsters and crab paste.

Also Australians love sweet chilli sauce and honey soy sauce, and because of their love for sweet tastes, desserts would surely be ordered by more than half of the customers. So it was possible to lower a total cost rate because of the great demand of dessert. Also what I found interesting between Japan and Australia was the difference in how they would time the serving of dishes.

There was again a young but wonderful chef with a good cooking sense at the restaurant, Andrew. He was 27 and he was the head chef of the restaurant. I thought that I couldn't beat him with his talent and distinctive character.

Having ended my time at Jordan's, I was feeling the growth of the Japanese tourist business in Australia and a change of times during my experience as a chef and as a floor manager of several shops. At that time I started groping for a seafood focused restaurant that would utilise hot pots, which didn't exist then. I was sure it would become popular among local people and tourists. So I purchased an almost bankrupt Italian restaurant for AU\$55,000 located at number 12 O'Connell street, where Masuya restaurant is located now. There was almost no equipment in the kitchen of the Italian restaurant. I just saw a big ad in the newspaper saying "Bargain Price!!(extraordinary value)". In earnest I challenged myself for the third time. But soon after I purchased I fell ill with Alopecia Areata for eight months...

In the next number, I am going to talk about my success

with the foundation of Masuya and catering for the Sydney Olympics, as well as talking about cultural differences in food between Japanese, Chinese and Westerners. To Hitoe-san, Mr Mizukoshi, the staff of Vanbulg House and Mr Shinohara, who took care of me during my catering business, I thank you sincerely and you will never be forgotten.

That's all for this month. Did you enjoy?

**Here are five pieces of advice that I have learnt, for those who are interested in the catering business.**

**(1) Don't settle for small profits and quick returns!**

Consider possibilities of new rivals, the depreciation cost of delivery cars and personnel expenses. Aim for a suitable profit for the business because these factors and others will stretch your budget.

**(2) Customers will surely get bored with the taste!**

Customers do get tired of the taste, no matter how good the rice is or the food you use.

**(3) Practice high sanitation levels with food!**

Use the proper equipment and facilities to maintain a high level of cleanliness and quality while cooking. When involved with a high amount of orders please use the proper equipment which is designed for extensive cooking.

**(4) Not only sales is important but also feedback from customers!**

You are able to observe the customers' reaction if you worked in a restaurant but with a catering business you are

not usually able to meet your customers. So, you can make an effort to attain feedback by going to see the customers or you can phone to ask their opinions and see if everything was satisfactory. This is a key point if you want your customers to keep returning.

**(5) Use a convection oven!**

Steamed, fried and deep-fried food and rice for 300 people can be done easily using a convection oven. You can cut personnel expenses and also it is great making desserts. It costs about \$50 per week to lease.

PART3

## IN NOVEMBER 1993, MASUYA RESTAURANT ESTABLISHED

IN THE LAST PART I INTRODUCED THE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN FOOD THROUGH CURRY, ALSO I SPOKE ABOUT MY LIFE AT 25, WITH THE BEGINNING OF MY RESTAURANT AND THE CATERING BUSINESS. THIS TIME I'LL WRITE ABOUT THE OPENING OF "MAUSYA" AT 30 YEARS OF AGE, THE DIFFERENCES IN FOOD CULTURE THROUGH VARIOUS NATIONALITIES AND CATERING AT THE SYDNEY 2000 OLYMPICS.

A street lined with office buildings based in the centre of the city, a convenient place for tourists staying near by at the leading hotels, to walk to... no.12 O'Connell Street, where it used to be the base of operations for Kanematsu Corporation, a Japanese trading company in Australia. They are known for pioneering wool trading between Japan and Australia. There now, is Masuya.

However the restaurant was a little shabby. The biggest problem was the gas. The gas was planned to be laid before the opening of the restaurant, but it was not able to be installed for three years. We had to use electric cooking machines. Using electricity was very inconvenient, for an 18 litre pot of water it took over 30 minutes to boil. Moreover, in order to cut down expenses, I delayed in buying a dishwasher for one and half years, and asked the waitress to wash the dishes that were stacked in the sink throughout the night, by hand after the last customer had left.

However, I had to ask my mother and my brother for financial support otherwise I would not be able to pay the staff their wages. In other words, I fell into financial trouble. We had lost customers and the staff were leaving one after another. I thought it was all over... I needed to ask my friends to help raise funds for the restaurant.

At such time, it struck me to offer lobsters at a special price. Along with this I carried out business proposals to sightseeing companies, as well as invited tour guides to the restaurant, so they would be able to inform the touring community

about my restaurant. I would talk to the guides about my life, work and the future of the restaurant until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. One year later, I made a contract to provide dinner to travelling honeymoon couples as part of a honeymoon package trip. Two years later, tour groups began to come to the restaurant.

While sometimes orders from the sightseeing companies was only little, we would begin cooking rice at 5am and would always cook whole heartedly. Late night finishes and early morning starts was very gruelling for some of the staff. The manager and the head chef would often sleep at the restaurant overnight. Masuya, was like no other restaurant, providing services which seemed impossible for other restaurants.

However there was also much failure. We received letters of complaints about food, also another incident was when one of the waiters spilt tea on a V.I.P customer, I needed to pay AU\$3,000 secretly to the sightseeing company to avoid any further trouble. Moreover there was a customer who got angry at one of the waiter's way to speak, and afterwards I went to see the customer at the hotel they were staying at. I knelt down and apologised. On that occasion, a manager of one of the sightseeing companies, who was 5 years younger than me, told me to think seriously on how to apologise to customers. I learnt the mental attitude that hospitality requires from him. After that, the restaurant began to take 100 to 200 lunch orders from each company.

Those days, Masuya concentrated its effort on events, such

as "Japan Week" at the Sydney Opera House and "Matsuri (Festival) In Sydney" in Darling Harbour. Since I didn't intend to make any profit from these events, my earnings were in the red when it rained on the festival days.

The "Matsuri" was held once a year, over several years and hundreds of people would turn up for the festival. Various events were held throughout the day at these festivals. People from various organisations as well as dancers etc. from all over Japan, would join in on the parade beginning on George Street and ending in Darling Harbour. Masuya held a stall in the festival and had sold more than 1,000 plates of Yakisoba (Japanese fried noodles). On that occasion, I was impressed with the late Mr Ito's leadership. He was an employee of a sightseeing company and he was in charge of the festival operations. Lots of Japanese and Australian people dressed in Yukata (Kimono for summer), got together and I was really amazed at the number of Japanese people living in Sydney.

There were tens of thousands of Japanese people living in Sydney. Soon after, from around 1998, Masuya started promoting their dinner menu to the locals, who were mainly Chinese and Korean. I promoted my restaurant as an universal Japanese restaurant which any nationality would enjoy. This idea is still evolving now under the guidance of the manager, Ms Okawa, who is a popular figure inside the restaurant.



The catering kitchen in Pymont, Sydney City

### Catering at the Sydney 2000 Olympics

FROM 1999, one year before the Sydney Olympics, the Japanese press and the people related to the Sydney Games visited Australia to prepare for the Games. They also came to Masuya. I have personally been looking after the beach volleyball players, Saeki & Takahashi, at the request of the chairman of their sponsorship company, for a few years. During the Olympics, the price of an apartment tripled or even jumped 5 times. The price of food also rose several times and the staff was also paid extra for working

during the Olympics.

I started preparing three months prior to the games. I began to secure frozen foods and plastic containers. Also I needed to find a place for the staff, who would work in the exclusive kitchen, to stay. I employed 30 people who were working holiday makers as well as exchange students to join my staff. I needed to extend the size of the kitchen because the Olympic Games would be a huge event. I leased 2 spaces (300 m<sup>2</sup>) next door to Masuya's "central kitchen" in Pymont. I lined two 20 metre tables so that 20 staff members can prepare 1,000 meals within 3 hours. Along with the catering work, the Masuya Group, which is Masuya in the city, Makoto and Masuya in Pymont was still in full operation. Masuya in the city and Makoto was open 24 hours and Masuya in Pymont, which used to exist at that time, opened until 2 in the morning 7 days a week.

The sales pitch of the catering section in the central kitchen was "Order and Delivery. 24 Hours a Day". The menu included the Beauty Bento which contained a heart type bathing agent, the Stamina Bento which had Wagyu (Japanese beef) and mini-royal jelly and also the Original Crab Sandwiches Bento. The Morning Fair Daily Makunouchi Bento had included freshly bought fish on that morning from the fish market. The Victory & Celebration Bento contains red rice and Tonkatsu (deep-fried crumbed pork). Along with these various Bentos we also had a hors d'oeuvre menu. However, deliveries to the main stadium, had been prohibited for

measures against terrorism one week before the opening of the games. Inaccurate information... road closures... occurrences like these were going to cause me to be in financial trouble...

I picked Mr Inoue as the team leader from 5 pm to 5 am, and Mr Miyashita as the team leader during the daytime, but there were only a few chefs who actually could use a kitchen knife. I envision repeatedly on how to train and organise the staff. I divided all the staff into a few teams; a menu development team, a Onigiri (rice ball) team, a team that would put together all the Bentos, a team to take orders and a delivery team. I left responsibilities to each one of the team members.

Two days after the opening of the Games, although the road closures and restrictions on deliveries were removed, other problems had arisen in the other restaurants. When I left to fix these other problems, complaints, frustrations and disorder of teamwork had evolved in the catering side... the staff had begun to become silent around the middle stages of the games because of the lack of sleep and fatigue.

For five days leading to the end of the Olympics, a staff member shed tears everyday. During this tough period a natural leader was born, Naoko. However I was severe to her. There were students among the staff who were from Melbourne and Wollongong and they must have thought why they were working and everyone else were enjoying the Olympics.

One week after the Olympics ended, I held a gorgeous party. There were no complaints about our service and products during the Olympics, far from that, we received a letter of thanks from the Japanese Olympics organization.

After that, Mr Miyashita and Naoko dedicated themselves to Masuya Group for more than 2 years. The night shift leader, Mr Inoue and “my star player” in the delivery team Mr Hatano returned to Australia to see me several years later. One of team members, Mr Sato is working at Musashi currently.

The Saeki & Takahashi team who I supported, bravely finished in 4th place after a tough and exciting game at Bondi Beach. I also challenged, like this pair, the limit of my own physical strength. Sydney Olympics was a great success and it showed the world how wonderful Australia is.

The Sydney Olympics has become an unforgettable memory for me and an amazing catering team of 30 amateurs. I want to say passionately - even if you are an amateur, go for it!! Boys be ambitious!

In the next number which will be the last number of this chapter, I will talk about the cultural difference in restaurant businesses along with the story on the beginnings of Makoto and Musashi. Plus, I will narrate about my aim to be the top Japanese restaurant in Australia.

That's all for this month! Did you enjoy?



The lunch boxes was a large hit during the Sydney Olympics.

## The Cultural Difference between Japanese, Chinese and Australian Food

### "Rice"

Although rice is the principal food for Japanese people, for Australians it can be a sort of vegetable. Therefore, it is hard to eat rice without any taste and fried rice is easier to eat for Australians. However, would you, as a Japanese, eat delicate tasted white fish Sashimi with fried rice?

### "Alcohol"

Most Chinese people don't drink alcohol with their meals. In fact, about only one out of 5 Chinese customers will order alcohol at Masuya and Musashi. On the other hand, almost all of the Australian customers will drink alcohol with their meals.

### "Fresh Fish"

Japanese people say that sashimi is the best way to eat fresh fish. However Chinese people would prefer to steam it. Likely, butter sauté is the Australians' favourite way. I agree with this undoubtedly if it's with wonderful white wine.

### "Quantity"

Usually the amount of sushi for one person in Japan is 7 pieces of sushi and 6 pieces of a thin small sushi roll, but for Australians this volume is just like an appetizer. Similarly, 250g of steak is huge for Japanese people but Australians would eat a 500g steak easy.

### "Timing"

Japanese people like their food served quickly but in the case of Australian they would prefer to be served slowly taking a suitable distance to the rhythm of alcohol, so serving food hasty will break the flow of the meal.

### Differences in the Australian Restaurant Culture

#### "Enjoy !"

Japanese people compared with Westerners are no competition when it comes to enjoying themselves. Why are Australians always greeting with a smile? They dine in at restaurants not only to eat but also to enjoy conversation and its atmosphere. Therefore it is very important for waiting staff to welcome them with a smile and to remember their names.

#### "Space"

In general, Australians are physically bigger than Japanese. Plus if you want to sell big meals like abalone or lobster dish, big tables and huge space is absolutely necessary. So we should consider the size of tables according to how much customers will eat.

#### "Lighting"

Although Chinese and Japanese people don't mind bright lighting in restaurants, Australians generally seldom likes lighting to be too bright.

### "Design and vessel usage"

For Westerners, design which involves interior design, cooking, fashion, town planning etc. is one of the most important things in their lives. So the basic colours for your restaurant's design, its layout and menu design should be less than three colours. Otherwise your appeal might be ruined.

### "Harmony of a Meal "

With Westerners, they like to take their time and enjoy their meals. Usually having white wine with an appetizer followed by red wine with the main dish, then dessert and coffee. This harmony and relationship of every part of the meal can not be changed easily. Therefore the Kaiseki cuisine, which is a Japanese tea ceremony dish containing many small dishes, would be difficult for a westerner to grasp, because they don't know which dish goes well with what wine or which is the main course. So westerners would find no harmony if they dine in this way. It is expected that different nationalities will think differently. Take Ikebana (the Japanese art of flower arrangement) as an example, flower arrangement in Japan differs completely from the western adaptation. In order to succeed in a foreign country, you would need to think totally

opposite to what you would usually think, that is to do a total 180 degree turn.

PART 4

## 20TH OF DECEMBER, 1999, MAKOTO

THROUGHOUT THIS CHAPTER I HAVE SPOKEN ABOUT MYSELF SETTLING PERMANENTLY AT THE AGE OF 22, THROUGH TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MY FIRST RESTAURANT, ALSO MY CATERING BUSINESS IN THE SYDNEY OLYMPICS. THIS LAST PART OF CHAPTER 1, I WILL TALK ABOUT OPENING MAKOTO AND MUSASHI RESTAURANT, THE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN THE RESTAURANT BUSINESS AND MY INTENTIONS TO BE THE TOP RESTAURANT.

THIS was the day Kaiten Sushi shop (sushi served on a rotating counter ) “Makoto” was opened. I often used to say to the staff that I wouldn't sell sushi this way. That is because, if you rotate the sushi, you would forget when each one was made, and would sit on the rotating belt for a long period and keeping the sushi at room temperature for extended periods could cause food poisoning. But why have I changed...?

This was the day Kaiten Sushi shop (sushi served on a rotating counter ) “Makoto” was opened. I often used to say to the staff that I wouldn't sell sushi this way. That is because, if you rotate the sushi, you would forget when each one was made, and would sit on the rotating belt for a long period and keeping the sushi at room temperature for extended periods could cause food poisoning. But why have I changed...?

One of the reasons why, was uncontrollable on my part. Immigration and the tax law at the time was changing, and this caused the attainment of business visas for skilled chefs from Japan more difficult. Another reason was to attract a variety of nationalities to eat sushi. With Kaiten Sushi, you would be able to offer 100 or more sorts of sushi, so the selections would be much more widespread. 20 kinds of sushi, 30 kinds of sushi rolls, 30 kinds of Gunkan-maki (sushi wrapped with seaweed with various toppings) and 20 sorts of hand rolls and original sushi would be able to be offered using the Kaiten Sushi system. Through this we can deal with those who cannot eat raw fish and vegetarians, and

also various kinds of herbs and spices can be used. This is a type of sushi business that meets everybody's taste. This can't be done in the more traditional sushi shops.

Makoto was opened with 30 staff including Naoko, from the catering business at the Sydney Olympics, Kuma-san, our guardian God and Jack who is still dedicating himself to Makoto. However, almost all the staff quit within the first three months. Plus, customers didn't seem to be enjoying meals... I, myself was scolding the staff severely... But the main problem was that I didn't understand the operation of Kaiten Sushi at all.

My tactic was "Hands Down Strategy" which is from a Japanese boxing comic called "Tomorrow's Joe" (Ashita no Joe). This tactic is used by the hero, Joe Yabuki, when he falls into a predicament. He just stops guarding himself and lets in punches. By doing this he opens up a small chance and breaks through to win. When you first open a restaurant, you don't know at all who the customers are, how old they are... so everyday I would observe the customers and learn. What I learnt was that Australian people don't eat Mackerel and Yellow Tail. Plus they can't appreciate the taste of white fish. Also Chinese people are very fond of only salmon, eel and sea urchin. But is this really true? How can we offer 10 or more kinds of local fish? How can we get customers to enjoy a new taste of fish? How do we serve customers in a Kaiten sushi restaurant? Later on, after such a start, Makoto was blessed

with greater popularity in 2002, it became a prosperous restaurant which forms lines of 40 people at the entrance.

### **17th of April, 2003, Musashi**

SEVERAL years ago, I began to notice my fading passion for the business side of the restaurant industry. The drink menu was the same as the restaurant I used to work in 18 years ago. If you go to a convenience store today, you can find dozens of different kinds of juice and soft drinks, also various types of mineral water and even blended juice.

Speaking about the menu and the interior design, only the Japanese restaurants hasn't developed in Sydney. Waiting as well is just simply taking orders and serving. That's all, nothing unique. Is this ok? I want to break away from the norm and change. There is so much wonderful food in Australia. I wondered if I can make my restaurant more popular than with just good food. Have a more aggressive way to serve customers, use many sorts of sales promotions and maybe make the waiters more unique with their performance; have a restaurant style which exceeds age and race boundaries, like a tavern, with no rules.

The main concept of the menu in Musashi was the use of the Teppan-yaki dish (dish on a hot plate) which can be applied for hundreds of different meals. One year after opening, Musashi

became a well-liked tavern restaurant which serves 550 customers a day. Although it is now successful, I won't stop improving the menu. I intend to make it grow more popular in two years time, among the Japanese, Australian and the Chinese public.

### **The Road to the Top of Japanese Restaurants in Australia**

I think that to have a small shop which only has one Udon noodles menu and be largely popular is success rather than to have a huge restaurant, with an extensive menu and be unpopular. In other words, it is just meaningless to have a big vessel unless you can get satisfaction from staff and customers.

Even though Masuya, Makoto and Musashi are all adopting different styles, each one of them are aiming for the same thing; to have original menus, first-class customer service and to be a restaurant that does not discriminate against any age group or race. We want to be a restaurant that is like no other. I don't intend to make a yearly turnover of 3 billion or 10 billion yen. What I have in my mind now is to evolve and develop these 3 restaurants, as well as my own future, who I will meet in the future, how my life will change, and if I am really capable to be a proprietor.

What I aim to be like is, the number 1 restaurant in Australia, Golden Century in Chinatown, Sydney. Golden Century can sit 500 customers totally, with private seating and securities for V.I.P guests as well 100 seats on the first floor and a further

300 seats on the ground floor. In the fish tank, fish and shellfishes caught in Australia swim. 15cm oysters and scallops in its season are served fresh daily. Fresh and delicious foods like these attract a large number of customers everyday.

Australian food is excellent, with its various juicy meats, cheese and delicious wine. The seafood restaurants also provide brilliant wine. The restaurant I wish to build is one that is open and receiving to all families, the young and old public, all nationalities and with an inexpensive budget of AU\$20 you would be able to dine and enjoy excellent Japanese food with the use of fresh tasty Australian products. The top Japanese restaurant in my mind would have to be comparable to the Golden Century restaurant, and one that Australia would be proud to call their own.

I feel that some readers were not interested in this part very much this time, because it was more business centred, but in the next chapter I will talk about my relationship with nature, also stories of my two month journey around Australia as a backpacker 5 years ago in order to change myself.

How was it? Did you enjoy?

### **Yakitori (grilled chicken on a skewer)**

IN almost all religions eating chicken is not forbidden. Also it agrees with people's health intentions. If you take recipes from foreign countries and various sauces, so many different tastes and meals can be made from one whole chicken.

For example, if you like Yakitori, get a fresh chicken and cut it into 5 fillets taking bones and bowels away and pierce in on a skewer, like a shish kebab. Make it double in size than normal to put on volume. Afterwards roast it using the cookware called "Higogriller" which uses far-infrared rays. There is a trader in Melbourne which carries this type of cookware. Lastly prepare 3 kinds of sauce, such as a sweet soy sauce or a sauce with more chilli or miso (beans paste) flavours.

Other recipes for chicken are Karaage (deep-fried chicken), Kushi-katsu (skewered pork deep fried in bread crumbs), Oyako-don (chicken-'n'-egg on rice), chicken cutlet rice bowl, etc. How about putting delicious Yakitori on rice? Or you can make chicken stock using chicken bones and give it to customers for free as take away.

With a Yakitori shop using these simple recipes on free range chicken and eggs, you can become a multi-millionaire, if it's really delicious. The most important things with the restaurant industry are the taste, the location and the concept of the shop.

I believe there are many Japanese women who have married Australian men and because they understand the cultural differences I surely want such women to challenge the restaurant business, with friends or maybe with husbands. Girls be ambitious! Australia is a country full of luck!

