



# Tetsuya sets course for Belle adventure

**DANIELLE McKAY**

WITH a splash of one of Tasmania's finest champagnes, world-renowned chef Tetsuya Wakuda had his luxurious Tasmanian-made wooden boat christened yesterday.

Aptly named Belle, the 38ft and 11-tonne beauty is almost exclusively constructed from Tasmania's huon pine, myrtle, Tasmanian blue gum and celery top pine.

The long-awaited launch at the Wooden Boat Centre in the Huon, where the boat was two-years in the making, is the latest adventure in the Sydney-based chef's love affair with Tasmania.

While Wakuda has been a long-serving ambassador for

Tasmanian produce, epitomised in his signature dish, confit of Petuna ocean trout, he will now also champion the state's timber craftsmanship.

When Wakuda first laid eyes on the boat centre's work, some four years ago, he was transported to Japanese childhood memories of fishing on a lake with his father and uncle.

Boat builder Dean Marks was overwhelmed when Wakuda first said: "I'd like one please, but bigger".

After visiting several boats together, flagging images in magazines and even a couple of discussions over Wakuda's famous food, the vision for the Belle was formed.

"This boat is of a very high standard, like Tet's restaurant and his food, he's got a very high standard," Mr Marks said.

Yesterday, exactly two years to the day since construction began, Wakuda said there was no other word to describe his beautiful boat but Belle.

"I normally like a modern boat but this one I fell in love with; it smells so good, the huon pine," he said yesterday.

Premier Lara Giddings said the vessel deserved the praise of being one of the most beautiful wooden boats ever built in Australia. "This vessel is the absolute embodiment of the fine workmanship and quality

Tasmania has become renowned for," she said.

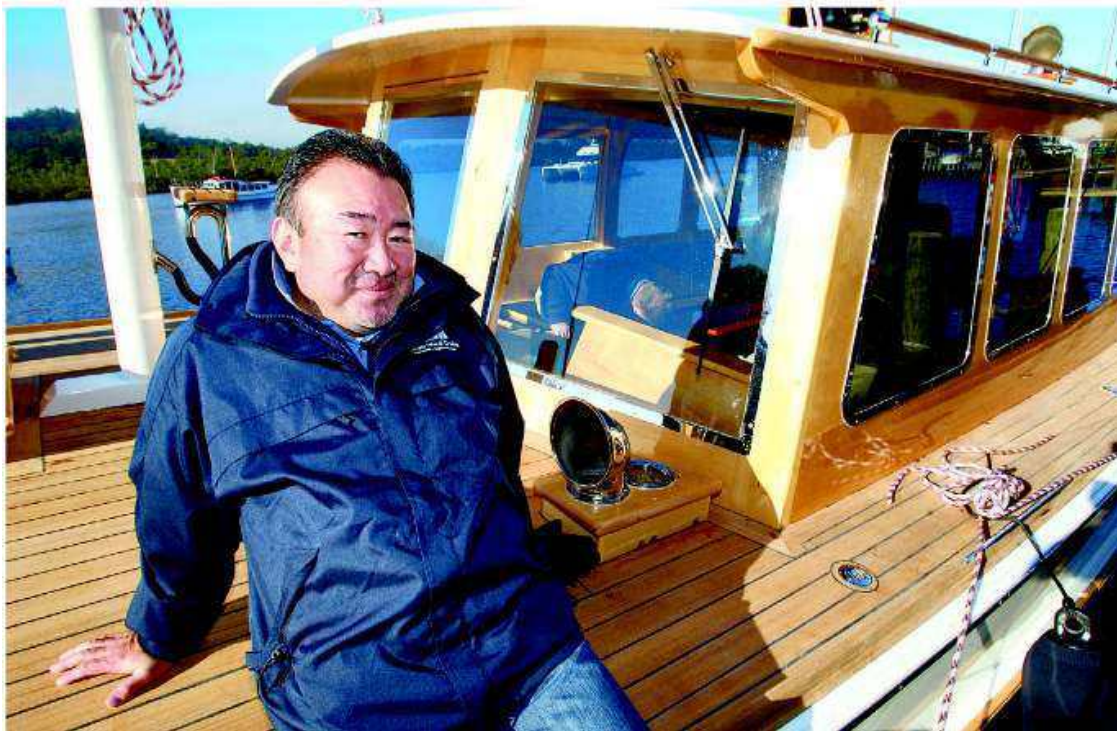
"It is a showcase of our Tasmanian skills." Ms Giddings said Wakuda's ongoing support of Tasmania was invaluable because of his global reach.

"As a brand ambassador, he has spread the word about Tasmania's fine produce around the world, creating priceless publicity for the state's food industry and tourism as a whole," she said.

Wakuda will keep the boat here and use it as an escape from his busy schedule, which he hoped would see him visit his "second home" more often.



**MOMENTS TO SAVOUR:** From left, Belle in her glory, Premier Lara Giddings christens the vessel and TV journalist Ray Martin takes in the atmosphere.



**SPECIAL LAUNCH:** Busy restaurateur Tetsuya Wakuda soaks up the atmosphere on his Tasmanian getaway boat Belle yesterday. Pictures: RAOUL KOCHANOWSKI