

ADDRESS BY
HIS HONOUR MR TOM PAULING QC
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
ON THE OCCASION OF
**LAUNCH OF THE 2008 TERRITORY CULINARY
CHALLENGE**

Government House, Darwin

31 March 2008

As the Administrator of the Northern Territory, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Government House today.

As Maggie Beer and Simon Bryant, ‘the Cook and the Chef’, have recently noted: *The NT is like the Garden of Eden, the people are great and you have seafood, pearls, mangoes, mud crabs, barramundi and crocodile.* No wonder this is such a perfect training ground for aspiring chefs.

Anyone with a passion for cuisine could be transported by the items of Territory produce in the six categories for 2008. It is a good thing that the camel cuts are only rump or strip loin as I have visions of a request to the Government House Property Manager to dig us a pit in the garden for a whole young camel stuffed with a goat and two chickens! I note that this method is banned in this challenge.

That method is however reminiscent of an occasion on the island of Tioman in West Malaysia when python was on the menu as it had swallowed a mousedeer which had gorged on mangoes.

My Research Officer, to whom the dish was offered, declined on the basis her Chinese year was ‘The Year of the Snake’. A lucky escape.

Malaysia is the origin of the fruit category – bananas. There are approximately three hundred species worldwide but the fascinating thing is that the banana is not actually a tree but is defined as the world's largest herb – try fitting that in your kitchen herb rack. It is just two years ago last week that we all learnt how much we enjoy bananas when Cyclone Larry wiped out the major harvest and caused the prices to skyrocket.

Whether it is sea perch or snapper, pak choy or chillies, I urge all competitors to use their creative juices to the full. You are in the enviable position of having at our doorstep some of the most amazing bush foods to add to your dishes. From the acacia and myrtle trees to the Kakadu plum - this has been identified as having the highest vitamin C content on the planet, containing 3,000mg of vitamin C per 100g of fruit, surely a recipe for extreme good health.

I applaud the Australian Culinary Federation NT for their support and promotion of this Challenge; the sponsors for taking the opportunity to further promote our wonderful produce; the competitors for all their hard work of preparation and inspiration.

I hereby officially launch the third annual Territory Culinary Challenge.