

# THE ASIAN EXECUTIVE 亚洲势代



## Victoria's Prized Export Secret WILD ABALONE

For centuries wild abalone has been treasured by the royal families of Imperial China for dining and medicinal purposes. Difficult to catch in deep cold, pristine ocean waters and requiring experienced hands to cook to its fullest potential, wild abalone is a joy to partake and indeed a luxurious treat.

Today, Australia is one of few places in the world where there are reasonable supplies of wild abalone – much of it found off the coastline of Victoria.

The remarkable aspect of wild abalone is that there is potential for Victoria to promote the availability of this delicate and delicious source of protein well beyond Chinese restaurants to the broader masses.

To fully understand the market potential of wild abalone, we interview industry stalwarts, Kaz Bartaska, Nancy Hong and Maomao Chen from Kansom Australia who are together pioneering the procurement and processing of wild abalone for a world market.

There are few places left in the world where wild abalone flourishes in relatively large numbers. The waters south of Victoria are particularly suited for wild abalone because of its purity, being fed by the Great Southern Ocean. The water itself is icy, oxygen-rich and full of nutrients having travelled directly from the Antarctic. There is absolutely no source of pollution along the pathway of these waters to the breeding grounds of wild abalone.

Victoria has had an active abalone fishing industry since the fifties. Fishing for wild abalone is still done by hand with divers seeking colonies of abalones that cluster on live reefs along the seabed. Tight regulations surrounding what can be caught and brought to the surface has ensured a viable industry.

Managing director of Kansom Australia, Kaz Bartaska is an industry pioneer. "I started my own abalone company in 1985 when I saw even then a bright future for seafood in Victoria. However, industry upheavals and the changes of political fortunes took me away and now back to what I am passionate about."

With a relative abundance of wild abalone and the emergence of farmed abalone, this generation has had an opportunity like no other to experience abalone beyond that of a special occasion.





For Kansom Australia, market analysis has shown that very few people understand abalone and for the most part, virtually all abalone product ends up in the food service sector, i.e., restaurants. Only in recent years, some abalone product starts to appear on supermarket shelves and food fairs. These products are increasingly becoming value-added and delivered as an entirely natural experience away from the traditional methods of taste and presentation.

Furthermore and more importantly, the largest source of tourists to Victoria today are from mainland China, and with wild abalone so prized by Chinese, there lies a significant opportunity to promote this natural resource as a major tourist draw card.

Says Kaz, “This could be the biggest calling card for Australia and not just Victoria. The idea could be no different to visiting France for its wine or cheese.” With so much relative output of wild abalone from Victoria, it seems like an obvious comparative advantage that Victoria enjoys over other regions of the world.

At Kansom Australia, the company has developed technologies for retail ready-to-eat wild abalone products that solve the mystique and technical challenges of cooking this delicate animal. Says Nancy, “Australia is now at a point of time in its commercial industry to promote and develop a domestic tourism strategy built around this unique commodity.” Maomao agrees. “There are many new jobs that would be created along our regional coastal areas – for seafood restaurants, cooperatives selling wide abalone, dive experiences or people having their abalone especially caught for them through a virtual experience – the opportunities are very exciting. Instead of calling Southern Victorian the ‘Shipwreck Coast’, we could re-brand a stretch of coast as the ‘Seafood Coast.’”

The public imagination is now very much fixated on food that is fresh, clean and acquired from impeccably bio-clean sources. Victoria has an exciting opportunity to promote wild abalone as the “Caviar of Asian Cuisine.”

Kaz enthusiastically says, “Imagine a tourist who orders live abalone directly from an operator down on the Great Ocean Road coast. A diver could be dispatched, pick up some abalone, bring it to the surface and have it cooked to order for the happy tourist. What an enjoyable and pleasurable experience.”

At Kansom Australia, the company has seen the potential with the fascination and prestige of wild abalone and developed ways to process it using world class technology. In its quest to utilise wild abalone to its fullest potential, Kansom Australia developed the world’s first all-natural abalone sauce that is a welcome source of flavouring to many savoury dishes.

For many Chinese, their closest experience to abalone is through tinned goods – and the experience is not always so positive. Says Maomao, “the problem with the international canned industry; there is an inconsistency with the quality of the product inside. There are lots of players in this market with less than high-quality standards.” Kansom Australia has gotten around the problem with a perception of product quality inconsistency by selling a range of abalone products you can see and touch in plastic pouches that can last for a very long time in people’s pantry. Says Nancy, “When you acquire this product from us, there is nothing else in the retortable pouch other than the abalone and the natural juices of the abalone or a natural sauce to provide a ‘different’ experience – that’s a huge source of confidence for consumers.”

For many people who appreciate the prestige of abalone as a dining experience, there is still a degree of mystery around what abalone is. Australia has four species of abalone of which the dominant species is called “black lip”, so-called because the black fleshy frill around the edge is black coloured. The other major species is called “green lip” because of its green fleshy frill around the edge. The other two species are called “brown lip” and “roei.” For people who make an effort, there is a significant difference between the taste of the black lip and the green lip. For consumers who can tell the difference between the various species of abalone, their efforts are rewarded. As the population gets better educated about abalone, a market pricing would emerge to help consumers differentiate the various products as the inferior abalone products are marked down in price, and the superior and scarcer products hold their own.



There is also an old wives’ tale about the conventionally accepted colour of an abalone. The traditionalists have prized an albino abalone – which does not exist in real life. The whiteness of the abalone was artificially exaggerated through a boiling process and a large dosage of sulphur dioxide. The process may yield a misconceived desirable colour, but so much of the true depth of flavour and nutrition of the abalone is ruined.

With the issue of sustainability of our natural products so much at stake, the embryonic abalone industry in Victoria is no exception. There is scarcely any wild abalone left in the Mediterranean. Wild abalone has been largely fished out from Mexico and California. The black market in South Africa has wiped out the wild abalone industry. Australia and New Zealand are the two of the countries left with a viable industry that is strictly managed by their governments. Taken together, they represent about half of the world’s supply of wild abalone.

The challenge for Australia today is to capitalise on a global market place. The A-grade branding and respected (regional appellation) geo-identity of Victorian wild abalone provides a unique and powerful marketing opportunity.

For Kansom Australia, the prospects are bright for a highly-desirable, local and export-ready product for dinner tables of over a billion people.



## 维多利亚州输出的珍贵宝藏 野生鲍鱼

几百年来,古代中国皇室一直将野生鲍鱼作为御膳食材及珍贵药材。由于野生鲍鱼必须在寒冷的洁净海域捕捞,而且仅有经验丰富的厨师才能充分呈现出其美味,它们堪称是奢侈的羹肴。

如今,澳大利亚是世界上为数不多的野生鲍鱼产量尚佳地区之一——其中许多产地都在维多利亚州的海岸线上。

对于维多利亚州而言,野生鲍鱼的非凡之处不仅在于其精美可口的佳肴且优质蛋白质的来源,而且推广潜力远远超出了传统中式餐厅以外的广大食客青睐。

为了更好地了解野生鲍鱼的市场潜力,我们采访了凯盛澳大利亚的Kaz Bartaska,Nancy Hong和Maomao Chen。这三位行业内的领军人物正共同开创野生鲍鱼采购及加工的国际市场。

世界上仍有大规模野生鲍鱼活跃的地方已经所剩无几了,而维多利亚南部纯净的南大洋海域非常适合野生鲍鱼的生长。此处冰冷海水富含氧气和营养,由南极洲直接流入并且沿途不经过任何污染源,从而成为了野生鲍鱼的天然摇篮。

维多利亚的鲍鱼捕捞业自上世纪50年代起开始活跃。至今为止,野生鲍鱼的捕捞仍然依赖潜水员手工作业,从海底的礁石中寻找隐藏的野生鲍鱼群。对于野生鲍鱼捕捞的严格法律法规确保了这个行业的持续发展。

凯盛澳大利亚的执行董事Kaz Bartaska是这个行业先驱。”1985年,我意识到维多利亚州海鲜业有光明前景,于是就创办了自己的鲍鱼公司。然而行业内的波动以及一些政治原因让我短暂离开了这个行业。但是现在我又回来了,回到了这个我热爱的行业。”

由于相对富足的野生鲍鱼产量以及和养殖鲍鱼的出现,如今的消费者有机会在特殊节日之外的场合也能享用鲍鱼这一美味。

通过市场分析,凯盛澳大利亚发现很少有消费者真正懂鲍鱼,而且绝大多数的鲍鱼产品都流入了饭店等食品服务行业。在过去这八年中,鲍鱼产品才逐渐进入走上超市货架,并进入各种食品展。这些产品的附加值正在逐渐增加,并为食客们带来了有别于传统口味及做法的更自然的味觉体验。

更重要的是,如今中国成了维多利亚州国际游客的最大来源国。被中国人视为珍宝的野生鲍鱼作为维多利亚州特有的天然资源,能够为本州的旅游业增添不凡的吸引力。

Kaz提出:”野生鲍鱼不仅是维多利亚州,也是整个澳大利亚的一个重要名片。就像当人们访问法国时,自然而然地就想体验法国著名的红酒和奶酪。”因此,与其他地区相比,维多利亚州相对较高的鲍鱼产量理应能成为该州的一个显著优势。

凯盛澳大利亚已经研制出了开封即食的野生鲍鱼零售产品,从而为消费者解决了如何才能烹饪好如此珍贵食材的技术难题。Nancy认为:”此刻,澳大利亚的鲍鱼营销行业需要为野生鲍鱼这个独特的商品制定一个旅游战略计划并加以推广。”Maomao也认同此观点:”(鲍鱼产业)能够为维多利亚州的沿海地区创造许多新的工作机会,比如海鲜饭店,出售野生鲍鱼的合作社,潜水体验,以及通过虚拟科技体验海底捕捞,并品尝到特别为他们’量身捕捞’的鲍鱼等等激动人心的机会。维多利亚南部海域一直被称为’沉船海岸,我们可以将其重命名为’海鲜海岸’。”

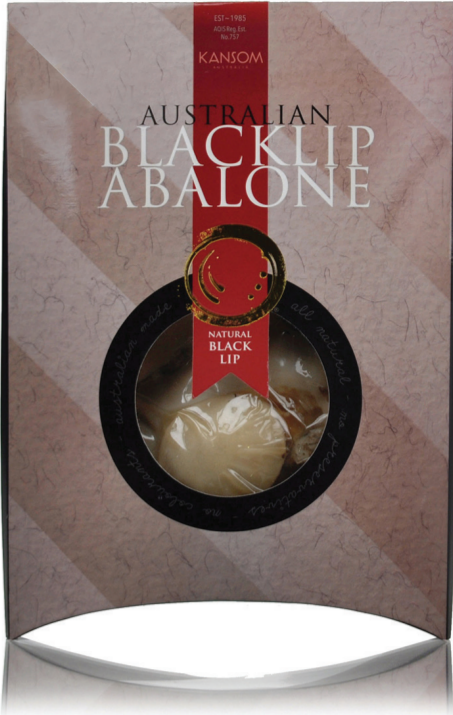
眼下,消费者们大多期待食品来自于新鲜,卫生而且完美无瑕的天然原料。而维多利亚州恰恰拥有一个令人振奋的机会将野生鲍鱼推广成”亚洲美食的鱼子酱”。

Kaz充满热情地说:”想象下一位游客在大洋路的海岸上点了一份野生鲍鱼,潜水捕捞员出发潜入海中,将野生鲍鱼带回岸上,然后根据游客的晚餐将其烹饪成佳肴给高兴的游客品尝。这是一个多么有趣且令人愉悦的体验。”

凯盛澳大利亚清楚地看到了野生鲍鱼的魅力与价值,并用世界先进的科技发展出独特的加工工艺。在探索发挥野生鲍鱼全部的潜力的过程中,凯盛澳大利亚创造出了世界第一款纯天然鲍鱼酱。这款鲍鱼酱广受青睐,并创造出了许多美味可口的佳肴。

对许多中国人来说,品尝鲍鱼的经历大多是食用罐装鲍鱼,而且并不能保证每次都满意。Maomao解释道:”在国际市场上,罐装产品的问题在于罐中产品质量的不稳定和不确定性。这个市场上充斥着有许多不尽如人意的产品。”凯盛澳大利亚将野生鲍鱼放入真空袋加工制成各类便于储存的产品,使得消费者可以看得见摸得着他们购买的野生鲍鱼,从而令这个问题迎刃而解。Nancy强调:”当你购买我们的真空包装产品时,里面除了鲍鱼和其本身的天然汁水或者天然酱料外,没有任何其他添加剂,这确保了消费者的独特体验,也给了消费者极大的信心。”

对于许多将鲍鱼作为珍馐美味来鉴赏的食客而言,鲍鱼仍然拥有许多神秘之处。澳大利亚有四种不同的野生鲍



鱼种类。其中产量最多的是”黑边鲍鱼”,因其拥有黑色的群边而得名。其次是拥有青色的群边的”青边鲍鱼”。另外两种品种分别被称为”棕边鲍鱼”和”罗氏鲍鱼”。如果食客们努力体会的话,就会发现黑边鲍鱼和青边鲍鱼的味道大相径庭。如果消费者能够区分出不同鲍鱼品种的话,他们付出的努力会带来相应回报。当人们越来越了解鲍鱼的时候,市场将决定不同鲍鱼产品的价格,从而帮助消费者辨别良莠。劣质的鲍鱼产品价格将会大幅下落,而那些高级或稀缺的产品将依然维持它们原有的高端价位。

人们对鲍鱼颜色的仍然有一种传统的迷思。守旧的食客们通常更偏爱白化病似的所谓美白鲍鱼,尽管自然界并不存在这种颜色的鲍鱼。很多鲍鱼的白色都是经过煮沸并投入大量二氧化硫等化学物质等人工工序夸大的。这种工序虽然可能获得一些顾客所迷信的颜色,但是鲍鱼其本身真正的滋味和营养却被毁于一旦。

就像其他的天然产品一样,仍处于发展期的维州鲍鱼行业的可持续性也不例外地岌岌可危。在地中海地区,几乎已经找不到任何野生鲍鱼的踪迹。在加利福尼亚和墨西哥,野生鲍鱼也已被捕捞殆尽。南非的黑市已经彻底摧毁了当地鲍鱼业。澳大利亚和新西兰是仅存的两个仍然由政府严格控制鲍鱼捕捞的国家。这两个国家的鲍鱼产量达到了大约世界野生鲍鱼总量的一半。

澳大利亚如今的挑战在于如何从在全球市场的机遇中获利。维州野生鲍鱼的优质品牌与其在亚洲备受信任及推崇的产地将为澳大利亚带来独一无二的巨大市场机遇。

对凯盛澳大利亚来说,如此一个既能出口也能在当地销售,并且令十多亿人向往能摆上晚餐餐桌的产品有着极其光明的前景。

