TheÂ globalÂ 'Culinary Olympics' landsÂ on Â Aussie soilÂ forÂ its grand FinaleÂ on WednesdayÂ 23rd ofÂ May

27 April 2012 -- The Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) Black Box Culinary Challenge will take place in Australia this year, for only the second time in its 16 year history. Recognised globally as the 'Young Chef Culinary Olympics', the competition takes place over four years and will culminate in a grand Finale in Hobart, Tasmania, on Wednesday, 23rd of May 2012.

Around 4,000 young chefs from different countries have prepared approximately 224,000 meals, cooked with more than 6,000kg of Australian beef and flown 930,000 miles since the Black Box was first introduced in December 1996.

Blazing a trail before MasterChef, My Kitchen Rules and Ready, Steady, Cook were even conceived, the MLA Black Box Culinary Challenge is one of the most respected culinary competitions in the world and the 2012 Finale marks the Centenary of this young chef competition.

The 100th event (the Finale) in Tasmania will bring together the crme de la crme of young chefs from some of the world's most prestigious kitchens five star hotels, restaurants, hotel and catering schools who are afforded the opportunity to think outside the 'box' and demonstrate their gastronomy skills before the world.

Presented with a secret black box of mystery ingredients on the first morning of the grand Finale, each team has just one hour to devise a four course menu, which, on the next day, is prepared and judged on taste, skill, creativity and artistic merit and presented at a prestigious gala dinner.

MLA Black Box Culinary Challenge competition coordinator, Alan Palmer, has been personally involved in 97 of the 100 events, including the first-ever event held in 1996.

"From a casual cook-off between young chefs under 25 years old, this competition has now become a global benchmark in the industry," Palmer said.

"Many young chefs' careers have taken off after competing in the Black Box; they are grateful to MLA for being afforded this great opportunity to express their skills both locally and on the international scene. Australia's very own George Calombaris was a competitor in 2005, which was a significant stepping stone to his current position as the face of blockbuster MasterChef."

Hobart's Henry Jones Art Hotel is representing Australia in this year's worldwide cookery event. Executive chef team leader, Andre Kropp, believes this is a wonderful opportunity to showcase Tasmania as our country's "food bowl" of ingredients to other countries, and is thrilled to represent Australia.

"We definitely went in with the attitude that we want to win, it's a great chance for us to represent the Henry Jones Art Hotel, our state and Australia. These opportunities don't come around very often!" he said.

Kropp also thinks the Australian team may have an advantage in the competition because of their experience in working with various cuts of meat. "We believe in a philosophy of using the whole animal, and really try to maximise the yield out of a particular product. This gives us a benefit, as were quite used to working with secondary cuts and breaking down the whole animal."

The event will also see teams from a number of developing countries travel and gain experience on an international scale with chefs from Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar competing in the 2012 finale.

South Korean team leader, Sung Kyu Jeon, said: "The MLA Black Box Challenge is a big deal for chefs around the world. It will give us an opportunity to develop new cooking techniques and improve our style. Were representing our hotel, as well as our country, so winning the competition would give us an incredible sense of pride. We are giving it our best!"

In the week of the Grand Finale, the chefs are also given a unique opportunity to tour Tasmanian farms and meet local producers, gaining a first-hand insight into the Australian culinary landscape. The tour will see them visit cattle, sheep and goat farms, which will provide a first-hand look at the provenance of Australia's