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Moreton Bay Bugs on the aquaculture taste-test menu

Aquaculture researchers, foodies, and growers of Tropical Rock Lobster and Moreton Bay Bugs took part in a blind taste test in Hobart yesterday, to understand the differences between aquaculture-grown Moreton Bay Bugs and those caught in the wild.

Held at Me Wah Restaurant in Sandy Bay, the taste test was attended by a selection of Tasmania's most well-known foodies, including Massimo Mele and Amit Laud. It included Moreton Bay Bugs *Thenus australiensis* grown on a formulated feed developed in the [ARC Research Hub for Sustainable Onshore Lobster Aquaculture](#).

Research Hub Director, Professor Greg Smith from the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) said developing feeds that meet nutritional requirements, facilitate animal growth and result in a quality product is a central component of the research program.

"We're striving to position Australia as the world leader in sustainable onshore systems for lobster aquaculture, by developing commercially relevant practices and technology that will enable sustainable onshore rearing of hatchery produced lobsters," Professor Smith said.

Mr Martin Rees, Executive Director of [Ornatas](#), said that he was excited to taste the product himself and get feedback from local food experts.

"Ornatas is dedicated to building a sustainable future for seafood," Mr Rees said.

"We are already commercialising the IMAS technology, producing thousands of Tropical Rock Lobsters and Moreton Bay Bugs. The taste test is a critical step in getting the flavour right for discerning markets.

"We are working closely with our partners at IMAS to ensure that the feeds developed in the project are economical, sustainable and result in an end product that tastes delicious.

"The texture, taste and flavour of our product is really important to make sure we can guarantee quality and supply of these iconic seafood products – and that's what this 'blind' taste test was all about."

Me Wah Director, Mr Stephen Tso, said he was intrigued to taste and compare the new product, and experiment with creating a signature dish.

“Our customers love seafood, so having a reliable supply of Moreton Bay Bugs that taste great would be an excellent thing for Me Wah.”

The Research Hub, funded by the [Australian Research Council](#) and headquartered at the University of Tasmania’s [Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies](#), is undertaking research focused on developing sustainable commercial production of lobsters. The collaborative research program includes researchers from the University of Auckland, University of the Sunshine Coast and Australian industry partners Ornatas and [PFG Group](#).

The research builds on work undertaken in the ARC Research Hub for Commercial Development of Rock Lobster Culture Systems, completed in 2019.

“This was a breakthrough for aquaculture, closing the lifecycle and developing unique aquaculture systems for hatchery production of lobsters,” Professor Smith said.

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Images are available to download [here](#)

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