The Northern Territory is fast becoming one of Australia's “tastiest” locations, with a variety of new and emerging food products on the menu, helping to make the NT the New Taste of Australia.

Primary Industry and Fisheries Minister, Kon Vatskalis, today presented Parliament with a colourful display of some of the lesser known fruit and vegetables on offer in the Territory.

“We all know how important produce such as mangoes and melons are to the Territory's $86 million horticultural industry, but what about the new and emerging food produce?” he said.

“Few Territorians would know we have identified and now producing for niche markets such as bamboo shoots, which are now being sold at the Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide markets.

“This is building on our already thriving Asian vegetable sector, which saw 2000 tonnes of Asian vegetables sent to southern markets in 2002 alone.

“Top End exotic fruit growers are also gaining recognition and interest for such produce as jack fruit and dragon fruit.

“A range of exciting opportunities has also been identified in Central Australia, with out-of-season table grapes eagerly sought after throughout the southern states. Hydroponic herbs and vegetables – including lettuce – have also led to new market penetration.”

Mr Vatskalis said the Territory's $200 million livestock industry is also gaining national and international attention, with buffalo and camel becoming increasingly popular on menus.

“On a recent trip to the United States, well-known local chef of the Hanuman Restaurant, Jimmy Shu, took camel meat with him to gauge reaction, and apparently the response was quite outstanding.” he said.

Seafood production in the Northern Territory is also moving with the times.

“Barramundi and mud crabs are iconic Territory foods, and have played a big part in growing the industry.

“Northern Territory barra was recently served at the Danish Royal wedding – surely there is no better promotion!”

Mr Vatskalis said one of the quiet achievers in our seafood industry is Spiralena – a blue-green algae that has wide appeal in the health food market. The grow-out and process of this algae is world class and has certainly set the benchmark.