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News from New Zealand

FREE PUBLICITY

For those of you that are interested in cooking and watching television, Master Chef and its many clones may not have escaped your attention. Recently in America, one of the chefs in the competition chose to cook a dish of New Zealand venison. Las Vegas chef Rick Moonen, who has first-hand knowledge of the New Zealand deer industry because he was an ambassador chef for Cervena in the US in the 1990s, lost the competition by only half a mark. Evidently, one of the British judges, Jay Rayner, deducted the marks as he believed that, as Moonen was an outspoken critic of unsustainable ocean fishing and food production, the use of venison was hypocritical because, he wrongly claimed, it was air-freighted to the United States. The judge put this fact on his blog the day after the final. The row then erupted into the social media. What followed was a brief Twitter and Facebook exchange of “thoughts”. Quick thinking by Deer Industry New Zealand has turned the whole event into a marketing coup.

Within a few minutes of being alerted of Rayner’s blog, DINZ Marketing Manager, Innes Moffat, had sent Moonen fact sheets on food miles and sustainability. A few minutes later, Moonen had the facts on his Facebook site: “New Zealand venison is sustainably farmed outside on natural pasture without hormones, steroids or antibiotics. It is sea freighted not flown into the US. Transport contributes just 10 percent of greenhouse gas emissions.” Rayner evidently replied, but he wouldn’t admit he was wrong. However, he seemed to concede that sea-freighted free range-raised venison was probably more environmentally sustainable than intensively raised local produce.”

The New Zealand deer industry isn’t too upset. They believe that, as it is a pretty big market, anything that lifts venison and the DINZ’s profile in a good way like this has to be of benefit. The lesson here for other industries that have been on the receiving end of misinformed or malignant comments – retaliate quickly and the facts can triumph over adversity.

Reference: Taranaki Daily News Online. 13/10/2010.