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**TERUYOSHI ABE, 60**

Owner of Sakuraya Fish Market

It's been 23 years since he first set up his import business here, and Mr Teruyoshi Abe is still excited about fresh seafood.

"These clams are very good for miso soup," enthuses the owner of Sakuraya Fish Market, holding up a plate of Asari clams. "A lot of customers ask for this in miso soup".

There is plenty for him to smile about these days. The Chiba native imports sashimi-grade seafood from the famous Tsukiji market in Tokyo and sells it at his two fish markets in The Village Centre in Buona Vista and Parkway Parade, as well as his full-service restaurant at Anchorpoint.

The business makes about \$7 million in sales annually and he hopes to reach \$10 million over the next two years.

Freshness is paramount to Mr Abe, whose business goes through 5 to 6 tonnes of seafood every 1½ months.

Fish sells quickly at his markets and eatery and is usually gone in less than three days.

He offers 30 to 40 types of fish, including rare species such as half mackerel, sauri and halfbeak, and otoro or fatty tuna is the most popular. He says Singaporeans now understand raw seafood better.

Regular customers often come in on weekends asking for "Hokkaido special menus, sushi and sashimi" after seeing these items on television shows such as Japan Hour.

His company has become a family business, now that his Singapore-educated children are helping out. His daughter Miyuki, 34, does public relations work while his son Masaki, 30, helms the kitchen. His wife Maoko, 60, is in charge of home deliveries.

Their customer base has shifted over the years, from a 99 per cent Japanese clientele at the start to a 90 per cent local following today.

"I still want to expand into the casual-dining market," says Mr Abe, who has already been approached to open at a new Serangoon location. "They're not high-end places but the quality must always be there."

Chin Hui Wen