

El Chorro Lodge Reopens in Paradise Valley

Written by Arizona Foothills Magazine

In June 2009 El Chorro Lodge was closed after new ownership purchased the property and decided to undertake a large renovation of the Restaurant, Pavilion and overall property.



Photographed by Mark Bosclair

The new owner, a long time Paradise Valley resident and notable philanthropist and co-founder of the Red Book, Jacquie Dorrance, put together a dream design build team, consisting of a local architecture firm, interior design firm, landscape designer, lighting designer and general contractor. The team of Candelaria Design, Vallone Design, Berghoff Design, Creative Designs in Lighting and Desert Star Construction were given the daunting task of reworking the aging property while maintaining the mystique that had drawn a loyal following for so many years. Originally built as Judson School for Girls in 1934, El Chorro Lodge was purchased by new owners in 1937 who then turned the structure into a restaurant. Set at the center of 11 acres of desert land near the base of well known Camelback Mountain, El Chorro Lodge today is considered to have some of the most desired real estate in all of Arizona.

The demolition and new construction was started in June 2009 and continued at a mind-numbing pace until the grand reopening February 18th 2010. The reviews came in quickly. The loyal patrons of El Chorro returned to complete amazement at the total transformation of the property.



In revitalizing the historic El Chorro Lodge, the team at Vallone Design working in collaboration with Candelaria Design, sought to maintain the classic ambiance and charm of the original restaurant while adding comfort and function to the design. The exterior patio remains the heart of the restaurant. The new patio space was expanded to include several new cozy fire features, spectacular custom umbrellas and new outdoor lounge spaces, while the original fireplace by the Classroom bar, that was a favorite hangout spot remains, original soot and all. Even the original wire patio furnishings were reintroduced with a minor facelift.

Keeping to the original footprint of the main restaurant, Vallone Design and Candelaria Design reworked the interior by creating a new open flow between the spaces. Upon entering the restaurant, the new indoor/outdoor bar serves as the main attraction. While seated at the bar, guests will enjoy some of the best seats in the house as they take in the breathtaking view of scenic Camelback Mountain. The indoor/outdoor feel continues throughout the main dining room and the bar lounge with the addition of large sliding doors that open to the adjoining patios.

Using the restaurant's signature shade of blue throughout the property, Vallone designers incorporated a sophisticated look by mixing clean lines with unique pieces that have a one of a kind, rustic charm. The eclectic mix of old and new, is further demonstrated in the designer's selection of artwork. Original artwork from the old restaurant along with cherished pieces from the owner's personal collection were artfully mixed with playful contemporary western artwork created by local artists. Paying further homage to the restaurants colorful past, the designers created three large picture shelves in the Main Dining room adorned with historic photos of some of the restaurants most cherished patrons. It was the primary focus of the Vallone design team, to create a laid-back Arizona ambiance indicative of the authentic experience patrons had come to expect, throughout in the interior while still integrating modern elements and function. The designer's creative use of old and new in such a classic timeless way keeps the original spirit of this restaurant firmly intact.



Photographed by Mark Bosclair

The loyal regulars that worried about losing their favorite watering hole were blown away by the classroom bar. The original fireplaces, old bar, light fixtures, artwork and remaining adobe walls have been maintained, while the indoor/outdoor feel has been introduced with the addition of sliding glass doors that open to a new patio with a cigar area outfitted with two plasma TVs and a large fire pit along with a dual bocce ball lawn. Just beyond the lush new Bocce lawn, Berghoff Design also introduced a new raised vegetable and herb garden that will serve the restaurant

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with some fresh produce as it develops. A new green concrete floor was added to the Classroom Bar in homage to the room's original design back in the 1930's. Cozy leather club chairs and hair on hide game chairs gives the space a new lounge feel while also maintaining the original ambience and cowboy charm.

The Event Pavilion also received a complete overhaul. Formally a tented structure, the original framework was enclosed and is now outfitted with a new HVAC system. Aptly named Casa Paloma, the large pavilion has its own prep kitchen, wet bar, spacious restrooms and a private bride's room with a private bathroom and a separate entrance off of a small exterior courtyard. The Vallone designers set up the room with two dressing vanities, a large step up platform with a three way mirror and a small lounge area. The main space of event pavilion was designed with a bright airy feel that blends seamlessly with a large adjoining patio that further opens up to the event lawn. The new lush events lawn, boast a breathtaking view of Camelback Mountain, unparalleled by any other venue in the Valley.



In addition to restoring the rustic charm, the entire property has also been pulled into the 20th century ideals with the use of earth-friendly and LEED-certified materials. Spearheaded by Desert Star Construction the re-design of this property included the addition of solar panels on the carports to provide El Chorro with sustainable energy for the entire property. The contractor also used LEED-certified green materials in the construction process along with installing loop solar thermal water heating systems will provide hot water to the lodge. Even the lighting design was custom tailored by Creative Designs in Lighting to adhere to the LEED certification rules. Coordination by all of the members of the design team and contractors tradesman to use sustainable material and practices has El Chorro under current review for Gold certification. These technologies and ongoing practices will help to significantly reduce El Chorro's environmental footprint.

Upon its grand opening on February 18th 2010, the redesign of this Valley treasure has been deemed a great success. In a city where everyone is looking for the next new thing, El Chorro remains a historic landmark that symbolizes a forgotten time in Phoenix's past. "El Chorro Lodge holds a very special place in Arizona's history, and we wanted to continue the lodge's reputation among many as their home away from home," said Donna Vallone, owner of Vallone Design. "We took our role in this project very seriously and we are very proud of the end result."

For more information about **El Chorro** visit elchorrolodge.com.

For more information about **Vallone Design** visit www.vallonedesign.com.