

# From its farm to your fork, The Ranch yields profits

Andrew Edwards, owner of the Anaheim restaurant and saloon, uses his land in Orange to harvest produce served to customers.

BY ANDERS HOWMANN  
FOR ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

The Ranch Restaurant and Saloon in Anaheim takes its produce seriously. The owner, Andrew Edwards, has transformed 3 acres of property in the foothills of the Santa Ana Mountains into a small farm that drives the restaurant's seasonal menu.

Managed and harvested by a small crew, the Orange farm's produce is transported directly to the restaurant to be cleaned, prepared and served in what Edwards has labeled regional American cuisine that takes a "farm-to-table" approach. The farm grows a wide variety of crops including heirloom tomatoes, corn, and, of course, the county's ubiquitous oranges.

The Ranch restaurant serves about 350 to 400 guests on an average Friday or Saturday night, according to Melissa Cutter, the restaurant's director of marketing. Its saloon attracts country dancing fans across Orange County and offers dancing Wednesday through Sunday nights. An avid country dancer himself, Edwards dreamed to open a venue where guests could enjoy drinks, dancing and a gourmet meal at the same location.

For Edwards, turning his property in Orange into a small farm was natural. Although he has been primarily working in electronics for 30 years as owner and president of Extron Electronics in Anaheim, he grew up and worked on a tobacco farm in North Car-



Jesus Flores waters crops grown at The Ranch Restaurant's organic farm in Orange. The farm grows produce that is used for the restaurant's dishes.

olina. When he decided to branch out and open The Ranch Saloon in 2011 and the accompanying restaurant in 2012, he was inspired to start the farm to benefit his new business.

"The one that really piqued my interest was Michael Jordan, who is our master sommelier. He has always planted and had a little garden of heirloom tomatoes," Edwards said.

Edwards believes the restaurant's heirloom tomato salad is its specialty. With around 60 varieties of the tomatoes, the restaurant has a "total abundance of tomatoes," he says.

He stresses the importance of delivering a quality product to customers. He said that being able to grow his own produce gives him more control over the fruits and vegetables the restaurant's chefs are given.

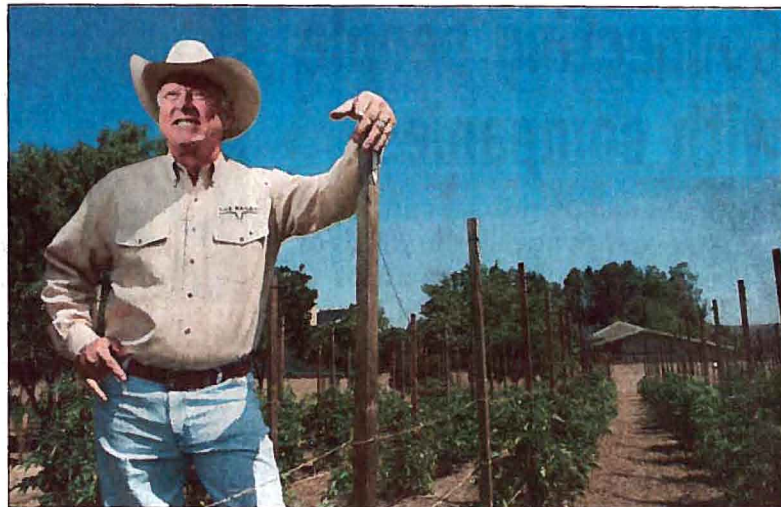
"It's organic here, guaranteed, and I have the land and I have the people to be able to do it," he said. "And when you grow it, you see it and you see how good it is."

To capitalize on the produce that is in season, the restaurant alters its menu with the farm's crop yields.

The spring menu usually focuses on stone fruits, the summer menu is heavily influenced by tomatoes and the fall menu uses gourds such as pumpkin and butternut squash. Edwards says the farm experiences its highest crop yields from April through September. Produce that is not used while it is in season is preserved and used over the winter months.

"There is just no way that here in Southern California in one farm that you can produce everything that you need year-round," Edwards said. The Ranch purchases produce it cannot grow from California companies that fit its needs.

Even though the restaurant has only been serving customers for a year and a half, it will be expanding to include a private dining hall above the existing restaurant, on the sixth floor of the Extron headquarters building. With a 200-seat banquet hall, a 70-seat private dining room and an 18-seat classroom kitchen, the sixth floor will allow the restaurant to host private dining events and train culinary staff.

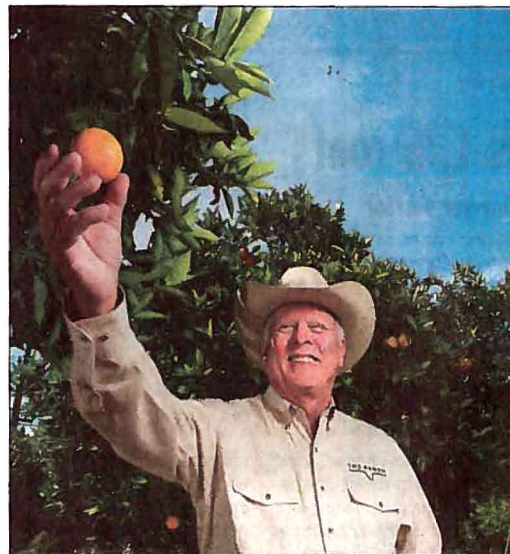


PHOTOS: KEVIN LARA, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Andrew Edwards, the 70-year-old owner of The Ranch Restaurant and Saloon in Anaheim, looks over the organic produce grown at his restaurant's farm in Orange.



A miniature hot house at The Ranch Restaurant's farm in Orange is used to begin growing a variety of fresh tomatoes. Temperatures reach as high as 100 degrees to give the seeds a proper environment for growing.



Edwards says The Ranch buys produce it can't grow from other California companies to help with menu options.



Oranges grow throughout The Ranch Restaurant's farm.



Plant seedlings are marked where produce is grown for use by the chefs.