

feature

**THE
HOTTEST**

**PEOPLE
OF ORANGE COUNTY**

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PHOTO CHALLENGE RODDIE (EDWARDS)

HIGH-TECH FOODIE

Andrew Edwards

Owner, THE RANCH Restaurant & Saloon
CEO, Extron

If you create a company and build it into a leader in its field, chances are you don't have much time left over for hobbies. If you do, you're not likely to reserve a cherished spot for them in your corporate headquarters.

But Andrew Edwards isn't your typical captain of industry. He is the man behind Extron, one of the largest manufacturers of components for the audio-visual industry.

When Edwards built a new headquarters for his 30-year-old company in Anaheim, he had a golden opportunity to indulge in his passion for food, wine and country dancing.

That's how THE RANCH Restaurant & Saloon was born. As soon as the high-end eatery and adjoining dance club opened in early 2012, fans of good food and good times took note.

"It's a passion project," Edwards says. "I love country music, dancing the two-step, enjoying the best in food and wine. For many years, I used to dance at the Old Crazy Horse off Dyer Road. It's where I met my wife, Morgan."

Critics have raved about THE RANCH's locally sourced, high-quality cuisine, eye-popping wine list and 14,000-bottle wine cellar. The 20,000-square-foot restaurant is on the first floor of Extron's new six-story corporate offices. Edwards indulged his taste for Old West culture, designing the restaurant and adjoining club in a rustic country style. Guests wait for their tables in overstuffed chairs and sofas.

Edwards approached Kelly Mullarney, a restaurant consultant whose clients include Prime Cut Café & Wine Bar in Orange, and hired a top-tier team to create a menu that would reflect his tastes for red meat and big-bodied wines: well-known sommelier Michael Jordan and executive chef Michael Rossi, both of whom had worked at the Disneyland Resort's Napa Rose restaurant.

Edwards and his staff are determined to keep things local; a farm in the Santa Ana Mountains is the source of much of the kitchen's produce.

"In the summer, we focus on our 400-plus heirloom tomato vines that provide more than 90 different varieties," Edwards says. "We also have heirloom cucumbers, peppers, squash and Valencia oranges that are used in our beet salad and ahi tuna crudo appetizer."

Edwards brought the same approach to the club and booked big-name music acts. For industry conferences, he has hired Dwight Yoakam; John Fogerty, of Creedence Clearwater Revival fame; and Darius Rucker, of Hootie and the Blowfish.

"I'm a Country Western music fan, and I started two-stepping with my daughter, Ashton, when she was 12 years old," Edwards told the Orange County Register when plans for the complex were announced in 2010. "There just isn't a place in Orange County for us to go with the right combination of good food and good music."

Thanks to Edwards' passion, there is now.

- PAUL HODGINS