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Donna Vallone: Behind the Design of El Chorro

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By Claire Lawton, Friday, Mar. 12 2010 @ 12:25PM
Categories: **Fun**

Donna Vallone, an Arizona native and ASU alumna, says her hometown when she was younger, but now can't imagine here.

She's been in the design industry for more than 30 years; her projects are sprinkled throughout the Valley. Last year, Vallone friend **Jacquie Dorrance**, new owner of **El Chorro Lodge** landmark.



Donna Vallone, an Arizona native and ASU alumnus, says she wanted to get escape her hometown when she was younger, but now can't imagine herself leaving.

She's been in the design industry for more than 30 years; her residential and commercial projects are sprinkled throughout the Valley. Last year, Vallone was approached by her friend **Jacque Dorrance**, new owner of **El Chorro Lodge**, to redesign the Arizona landmark.

Vallone says it was a no-brainer. "It was going to be the first free-standing restaurant in our portfolio ... We were so excited; Jacque is a great client and a person with great taste."

Anyone who's been in Arizona for a year (or 60 years) knows of **El Chorro's longstanding history** in its neighborhood. This was one of Vallone's biggest challenges. "Everyone that you talk to has so many memories here -- from 80th birthdays to 8th grade graduations ... I think everyone who has come back since we reopened has been pleasantly surprised with the changes."

Vallone and her design team kept the floor plan of the original schoolhouse-turned-bar (including the green flooring); They even kept the boot lamp and old indoor bar. But Dorrance and Vallone decided it was time for a little nip-tuck.

Renovations include a massive indoor/outdoor bar area, additional dining areas in the front and back rooms, a remodeled event and wedding reception area, an herb garden, a bocce ball court, a cigar pit ... Fear not, the sticky buns are still baking in the kitchen.

