

# Rancho Viejo marks 10th anniversary

By Jim Williams  
Correspondent

*Workin in the fields till you get your back burned, workin 'neath the wheels till you get your facts learned, baby I got my facts learned real good right now.*

The lyrics to “Badlands,” written over 30 years ago by Bruce Springsteen, apply just as easily now as they did then: Just ask Javier Luna.

Now in the midst of celebrating Ranch Viejo Mexican Restaurant’s 10th anniversary, Luna is a testament to hard work and perseverance.

“This is without a doubt one of the biggest accomplishments of my life,” said Luna. “Other than going to college. I was actually born in the United States, but because my parents were migrant workers, I spent a lot of time growing up in Mexico.”

After having spent the better part of 11 years in Mexico, the family eventually landed in the San Francisco Bay Area where Luna went to school. While very much enjoying the area, he could see things changing and the competitive disadvantages of staying in the area.

Eventually, Luna’s parents settled in the Redmond area; after completing college, Luna was offered an opportunity to join his family here.

“We left the Bay Area because of the power and the expense I saw all over, and I just didn’t see a future there,”

Luna explained. “Moving here I felt right at home because we are from a small town in the Jalisco province in Mexico, and now this is a small town that me and my family have adapted to and really love.”

Even though Luna waited tables and worked in the restaurant business while in school, it was not his intention of owning or managing a restaurant until his father approached him with the idea.

“My parents actually made a pitch while I was still going to school that if I moved up here they would help me buy a house, which was out of the question in the Bay Area,” said Luna. “On top of that, he said he’d help me buy a restaurant business. Now, I just didn’t see myself running a restaurant business having just completed school. I was familiar with the business, having waited tables, and was familiar with managing a bit, but I really didn’t see having my own company at the time.”

After giving it some thought, a newly married Luna left the Bay Area for the challenges of Central Oregon. Initially, Luna looked for work in accounting and payroll, but soon discovered a couple of things about the area.

“When I got up here, I realized how hard it was going to be to get into my chosen field, and how low the

wages were compared to the Bay Area,” said Luna.

Luna met a restaurant owner who offered him a job in Redmond, which helped kick-start his career. Starting as a server, Luna eventually learned every aspect of the restaurant business, including managing. After a stint as the manager at El Rancho Grande in Redmond, Luna was offered the job as manager at the Sisters location.

“Things were starting to go downhill for them in Redmond, so they offered me the restaurant here, and closed the Redmond location,” Luna said. “That is when my father and one of my sisters came on board as partners in the Sisters location.”

Of course by 2007 the nation-wide economy started to wobble, and eventually Central Oregon and the rest of the country were hit with one of the longest, deepest recessions in history.

“We knew it was going to be hard. I mean there were other, already established restaurants in town and we were all having issues, but we just kept trying to get the local community behind us and really liked what we were doing,” Luna said. “But it was extremely difficult.”

By 2010, the economy started to turn the corner, as did the success of the restaurant. After several years of hard times, by 2011, business



PHOTO BY JIM WILLIAMS

Javier and Loraina Luna have persevered to the 10-year mark with their Mexican restaurant in Sisters.

was good enough that Luna could buy out his partners, and he and his wife, Loraina, found themselves as sole owners of the restaurant, now called Rancho Viejo.

After having bought out the previous owners and his partners, it was important to Luna to put his own stamp on the identity of the new restaurant.

“Even though the name was part of the purchase, initially, it was very important to get our identity out there,” explained Luna. “We started doing our own menus, writing new recipes, and just adding our own touches wherever we could. We’ve reinvested a lot of profits back into the restaurant, which has helped continue to make us profitable, and continue our high-quality food and atmosphere. And believe it or not, I really enjoy and appreciate the competition with the

other restaurants in town. People have choices, and choices mean that people are in my restaurant because they love my food, or atmosphere, seeing their friends, or even enjoying visiting with us and my staff.”

Luna is also very aware of the impact that he has on the local economy not with just taking care of his customers. In the summer months he employs as many as 25 full- and part-time employees, and during the slower months about 13. Being small, with a lot of skillsets, helps Luna act quickly if need be and helps keeps his costs down and overall quality high to meet demand.

Now with a young family of four and all the responsibilities that go with it, Luna is still “working ’neath the wheels,” while contributing to the success of his community.

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