



A water wheel decorates Old California Restaurant Row. The restaurant complex has become a popular North County destination.

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One man's foresight

What was once 'like 20 chicken ranches' has grown into a North County destination due to Jim Eubank's vision

By Savannah ThomasArrigo
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It is an oasis for hungry travelers, a favorite place for families to pass time and a gathering spot for all of North County: Old California Restaurant Row.

With food offerings ranging from Mexican to Chinese to Indian, San Marcos' Restaurant Row has something to suite every palate.

But it was not always that way.

Back in 1972, when Jim Eubank first conceived the idea, Restaurant Row was nothing more than a plot of dirt.

"I thought, 'why in the world is he looking at this property,' because it was like 20 chicken ranches," remembered Vera Eubank, laughing.

Jim was looking into the future, though.

He predicted the undeveloped triangle of land located between Interstate 15, Interstate 5 and the newly constructed two-lane State Route 78 would soon be booming.

Jim, who died in 2004, started out with a fruit and vegetable stand, selling avocados, lemons and grapefruits from the family's yard.

Then he began constructing the outline of his vision of what would become today's Restaurant Row.

"He didn't know who was going to come or where or anything," Vera said. "He just made an outline and put a sign out in front: 'Restaurant available.'"

The first restaurant, Gentlemen's Choice, opened in 1978, where Zip & Zack's Restaurant and Bar now sits. Offering a set menu of prime rib, baked potato and salad for \$4.95, the restaurant began attracting customers.

"It really went over," Vera said of the restaurant's basic approach to food.

A seafood house opened next, followed by an Italian pizzeria, but the restaurants struggled in the midst of a poor economy, Vera said.

"Nobody would come, so . . . Jim and the boys and I and my mother had coffee by the window over there for hours and hours (to attract passersby to the restaurant)," Vera said.

Slowly, interest in the restaurants grew as the North County population increased.

"The whole North County was under-restauranted at that time, we had people driving from Fallbrook (and) Escondido," said Bob Eubank, Vera and Jim's son.

With every new destination Restaurant Row added, a greater number of people came to the complex.



When Jim Eubank first moved to North County, San Marcos Boulevard was a two-way dirt lane. Old California Restaurant Row



Jim Eubank's first fruit stand sits at the location Old California Restaurant Row now occupies. Old California Restaurant Row

Farmers Market

WHAT Fresh fruit and vegetables, baked goods, speciality food items and arts and crafts are available for purchase.

WHERE Old California Restaurant Row, 1020 W. San Marcos Blvd., San Marcos

WHEN 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sundays

Foresight

>From B1

“(When) every new restaurant came, it created a bigger magnet and every time a new magnet came in, it pulled from a broader radius,” Bob said.

With the construction of Edwards Cineplex in 1998, Restaurant Row became more than a place to dine, it is a destination for North County families.

Boasting 18 restaurants, the complex will soon have 19,

when Maui Bistro opens in November.

“Everybody knows Restaurant Row is a really nice place to go,” said Mary Stanford, office manager for Maui Bistro. “We kind of thought we would fit in nicely with (the other restaurants).”

For the Eubank family, Jim’s dream has come full-circle.

“He was a tremendous man, a man of courage and foresight (and) ability,” Vera said.

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