

# CLASSIC COOKING

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# Gourmet

THE MAGAZINE OF GOOD LIVING

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RESTAURANTS  
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El Charro's employees posed for this photograph in 1940. Today, the memento-filled restaurant is decorated with vintage sombreros and romantic old paintings and calendars depicting dashing Mexican horsemen—*los charros*—serenading beautiful *senoritas*.

## 1922 EL CHARRO CAFÉ

**CLAIM TO FAME:** No one really knows who invented, or named, the Arizona-Sonora specialty known as the chimichanga—a deep-fried burrito—but El Charro does it up proud and crisp and tells the best story. In 1928, founder Monica Flin accidentally dropped a stuffed burrito in hot oil and began to cuss, but, with children present, caught herself and said “chimichanga”—Spanish for “thingamajig.”

**WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:** Get ready to savor El Charro's celebrated *carne seca*—juicy strips of beef marinated in lime juice and garlic and air-dried in wire cages on the restaurant's roof—in just about everything but dessert.

**WHAT TO ORDER:** Seafood sparkles in the house ceviche and in the *enchiladas del mar*, which are mantled with white cheese.

**THE REGULARS THEN:** Townspeople hungry for Sonoran-style tacos and enchiladas.

**THE REGULARS NOW:** Locals and travelers hungry for the tastes of Old Tucson.

**LITTLE-KNOWN FACT:** Descendents of the Flins still own the café (and several branches), but family connections run deeper—some of the restaurant's staff are the third generation in their families to work at El Charro.

311 N. COURT AVE., TUCSON (520-622-1922; ELCHARROCAFE.COM)

## RESTAURANT GUIDE TIME'S TABLES

It's not always about the hottest new scene and the most flamboyant celebrity chef. Sometimes it's more about the memories, the sense of place, and the kind of food that comforts rather than confronts. These legendary spots—which all opened before 1941, when *Gourmet* debuted—are the restaurants we're still crazy about after all these years.