

Topic Page: [restaurant](#)

Definition: **restaurant** from *Collins English Dictionary*

n

1 a commercial establishment where meals are prepared and served to customers

[C19: from French, from *restaurer* to restore]

Summary Article: **restaurant**

from *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

a commercial establishment where meals can be bought and eaten. In the 16th cent. English inns and taverns began to serve one meal a day at a fixed time and price, at a common table, and usually distinguished by a special dish. The meal was called the ordinary, and inn dining rooms and eating places generally began to be called ordinaries. Famous among those in London were the Castle, much frequented by luminaries, and Lloyd's, a meeting place for merchants. In the 17th cent. the ordinaries became fashionable clubs, gambling resorts, and eventually centers of such intense political activity that they were closed by Charles II in 1675. In France, a loose equivalent of the ordinary called the table d'hôte, which served a standard daily meal, usually roasted meat, at a communal table, was popular by the mid-18th cent. The name restaurant was first used (c.1765) for a Paris establishment serving light ("restoring") dishes. By the late 18th cent., the Parisian restaurant had become a place offering single servings from a somewhat varied menu and seating at private tables. After the French Revolution, many former chefs of aristocratic houses opened restaurants. While the revolutionaries had favored the egalitarian table d'hôte, the bourgeoisie of the Restoration transformed the restaurant into a French institution that flourished in the 19th cent. and thereafter.

Early American taverns and inns resembled those of England. The White Horse Tavern in Newport, R.I. (founded 1673), claims to be the oldest. Fraunces Tavern (see under Fraunces, Samuel) in New York was a famous meeting place. The first modern restaurant in New York City was opened (c.1831) by John and Peter Delmonico. The self-service restaurant, or cafeteria, was originated in the United States by philanthropic organizations to help working women secure cheaper meals. The idea was rapidly adopted by commercial restaurants, business organizations, and schools. An outgrowth of the cafeteria was the automat, which first opened in 1902 in Philadelphia and offered prepared food that was displayed behind small glass doors and could be purchased by depositing coins into a slot, which opened the doors. Although the last automat closed in 1991, the idea survives in the fully automated vending area, in which prepackaged food and drinks are dispensed from coin-operated machines. In the 1920s and 30s, diners, quick, cheap eating places resembling railroad dining cars, became popular places to eat. Car service restaurants, or drive-ins, first appeared in Florida during the 1930s. The foods sold at lunch counters and drive-ins was called fast food: hamburgers, hotdogs, french fries, and milk shakes. The franchising of fast-food restaurants has led to a boom in these establishments, and today millions of people throughout the world eat at fast-food chains such as McDonald's. Since World War II, most major cities have experienced a proliferation of ethnic restaurants.

See Finkelstein, J. , *Dining Out* (1989);

Spang, R. L. , *The Invention of the Restaurant* (2000);

Trubek, A. B. , *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession* (2000);
Haley, A. , *Turning the Tables: Restaurants and the Rise of the American Middle Class, 1880-1920* (2011).

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restaurant. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/restaurant>



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