

Cafeteria on Wheels Will Solve Dining Room Deficits

By HELEN EWING BENJAMIN

IMAGINE replacing the present service by waiters, now in effect in your club dining room, with cafeteria service. Your immediate reaction will probably be: "It can't be done—my members wouldn't stand for it." Granted. But suppose you so disguise this cafeteria idea that your members consider it more distinctive than your present method of service? Would it then be possible for you to cut down costs, increase revenue, and generally make a better showing in the club food department? The author of this article tells you how this can be done.

IN THIS article, I shall describe a type of cafeteria service with several unusual features never adopted, to the best of my knowledge, in any club dining room, although the principle has been most successful in other eating establishments where high standards of service are demanded.

The basis of the whole plan is to wheel before your dinner-guests a tea-cart for each course of the meal: one cart at a time rolls up, the guest chooses the foods his appetite dictates, he is served, and the cart wheeled away.

That, in a nut-shell, is the idea. Important details appear later in this article, but for the time being let us consider what advantages the plan offers.

Plan Permits Economies

Outstanding is the sharp reduction possible in the number of items the menu must carry. Where a printed menu is used it is necessary to list many dishes to meet the various whims of your diners. A printed menu is cold, unattractive and rarely arouses great enthusiasm in a reader's breast. Unless a large variety of foods are offered, it is frequently difficult to please the tender palate of an eater. He reads: "Fillet of Flounder, Tartar Sauce" and says, "Bah, fish!"

But if this same hungry diner sees this flounder, skillfully cooked to bring out its best appearance and odor, plus artful little touches in the way of garnishes, he's very liable to decide fillet of flounder is exactly the food he wants.

Advantage number one, then, is that the

tea-cart plan will reduce by half or more the number of items the kitchen must prepare. This does not mean that steaks and chops and various quick-order dishes are to be eliminated from the menu; but it does mean that a diner, seeing and smelling several entree choices in front of him, is very liable to choose one of them, rather than wait several minutes for a special dish to be prepared.

Fewer Employes Needed

Advantage number two has to do with the elimination of several employes, both in the dining room and in the kitchen. Service from tea-carts can be effected with surprising economy; one waiter or waitress can easily take care of twenty-five diners, passing from one to another as they finish each course. Instead of countless trips to the kitchen and back again, the carts hold enough servings for 12 or more diners; until the cart has been emptied, no kitchen trips take time from the active work of serving the food.

When the cart is empty, wheel it to the kitchen. Remove the empty serving platters, etc., from the cart, replace them with other platters ready filled by the kitchen staff, and wheel the cart back into the dining room, ready to take care of a dozen more patrons.

Advantage number three to the tea-cart service scheme lies in the reaction of your members. To them, there is nothing about the service which hints at economies or suggests a cafeteria in any way. Instead, they like the promptness with which they are given their food, and the novelty of the

method of serving gives an air of distinction and smartness to the meal.

A fourth advantage of the plan lies in the human failing long ago noticed in cafeterias for people to order more food than they really want. Go to any cafeteria and notice the portions of food that the customers buy, carry to the table and then barely nibble at. It's one of the secrets of cafeteria success.

The same tendency is present where the tea-cart service is used. Your members see the food *while they are still hungry*; their eyes are bigger than their stomachs; they order more than they want. Especially if your dining room is on an a la carte basis, this is an important factor.

Simplicity Can Have Distinction

Some managers, to whom I have described the tea-cart plan, brought up the point that it would eliminate from their dining rooms the atmosphere of luxury their members so dearly love. I cannot agree that elaborate service is essential to distinction.

There are certain Americans badly bitten with this false idea of European luxury. These are often people who have grown suddenly rich; and there's no knowing what people will want who have had heaps of money come to them with swift ease. Some of them like to pay for six men back of a dining room chair; a butler, four footmen, a water boy, and a bus boy—all with badges of office clearly indicated by their liveries. This is a common concept of luxury in these United States.

The same notion has invaded many country club dining rooms—not through the managers, but more often at the suggestion of members or officials. The belief is that a lot of "swank" will so please the general membership that a larger and therefore a more profitable patronage results.

Well, the answer is that it doesn't.

Yet frills are attractive and they can be profitable. They add to the interest and therefore to the patronage. But as clubs in general are now organized, they are a good deal like the Irishman's statement: "the more you succeed the faster you fail," for costs mount skyward out of all proportion with patronage.

Elaborateness Is No Guide

Elaborate formalities add nothing to the distinction of dining room service. Families on whom fortune has smiled for generations find the service of a maid or two ample—and that is certainly simple.

Or, take the country families of England, or of Scandinavia, or of France—their dining room service has so simplified itself that a maid or two will now suffice for their most exacting dinners.

At Holman Kolan, the show club of Norway, a single waiter takes care of you. The Norwegian King frequently dines at Holman Kolan, where one waiter cares for his Majesty and his entire party in these famous dining rooms. The same simplicity is acceptable to the English King. At Cap Martin, a few miles towards Italy from Monte Carlo, the English King and his party of twelve have eaten in the public dining room and were well satisfied with the services of two waiters.

Early Tea-Cart Services

Like everything new the best results seem to arrive by the miserable route of trial and failure; and this tea-cart system which is set out here is no exception.

The first move in the direction I recommend was made in London at the famous "Simpson's." The motive was to give an unusual style and great distinction to the service.

A large copper, rather shallow box was set on wheels. After filling the box with boiling water, a huge tray was set in an opening on top. On this tray an enormous roast of beef was laid and this was covered by a large dome, which was raised and lowered on balancing weights; underneath the water was kept hot with a spirit-lamp. This roast-cart was wheeled up to the table of the guest, the cover was raised, and a slice of the roast was carved to the guest's liking.

Shortly, this same service was transported to New York where it became a much discussed feature of the service using it. The cost of the roast cart at that time was \$875, yet it carried just one item of the menu!

Then, a manufacturer of silver developed what he called an "hors d'oeuvres cart." This was nothing more than an ice cart, built along the same lines as Simpson's roast cart, but devoted to the *first* course instead of the main course of the dinner. For some time these hors d'oeuvres carts have been popular in distinguished American homes as well as in exclusive city clubs and a few country clubs.

It remained for one of the largest and most attractive apartment hotels in Chicago to adopt this service as a means of reducing costs in the dining room. Instead

of applying the principle to the first course of the dinner, the Edgewater Beach apartments put the entire main course on wheels. This resulted in a real saving, not only in service but in the reduction of waste as well. Fewer dishes were needed to meet every diner's taste. Fewer employees were needed to render adequate service.

How Food Is Kept Hot

You are possibly wondering how food can be kept hot from the time it is dished out in the kitchen until it is served from these "rolling cafeteria" tea-carts. There are two types of containers which solve this problem.

First, there are "hot water plates," or platters, which in reality are nothing more than chafing dishes, except that they are heated over electric hot-plates instead of standing on tripods with a spirit lamp beneath. They have china tops which fit over a metal basin in which water is kept hot. Although the china tops are subject to breakage, the original cost of these platters is not prohibitive, running around \$15 complete. A cart and complete service can be purchased for \$200.

The second type of dish is a patented metal "hollow-ware," silver-plated in simple design and of a size such as a family of eight or twelve would require. Two shells of heavy metal have been hermetically sealed together; in the space between the shells is a material which makes continued outside heat unnecessary. To get the heat to keep the food at proper temperature, the dish is immersed in boiling water for several minutes. It takes on the heat of the water and retains it for two hours or more.

The cost of these silver containers is higher than the china hot-plates, running around \$375 for the complete set of dishes needed and the cart. The metal-ware will give many years of continued service and therefore is probably as economical as the other type. You will need one set for each 25 guests.

At this point it might be well to point out that it will require some investment to install the "rolling cafeteria" idea in your dining room, but the cost will not begin to approach the amount of money necessary to put in an adequate cafeteria unit of the regular type, which runs into several thousand dollars as a rule. The necessary plumbing alone is very expensive.

Now for a few words on the sort of meal that can be served from these tea-carts in a club dining room.

How Rolling Meal Is Served

The tables are laid just as they would be in a fastidious home, with linen, silver, glasses and service plates in place.

You seat yourself and the waiter rolls alongside your table a cart of hors d'oeuvres. You see such things as:

- Tort plate of Canapes
- Plate of Mixed Meats
- Pickles Chow-Chow Cole Slaw
- Salted Nuts Celery Radishes
- Sardines Anchovies Caviar
- Ginger Ale Punch

You look the cart over, indicate your choice and the waiter serves you, after removing your service plate. You take exactly what you want and only what you like. When you and your guests have been served, the cart is wheeled away.

Having enjoyed your hors d'oeuvres and canapes, and while your table is being put in order again, a second tea-cart is wheeled to your table, on which will be such items as:

- Chicken Gumbo, with Rice
- Cream of Asparagus, Crotons
- Bellevue Toast Assorted Rolls
- Toasted Crackers Cheese Sticks
- Bran Rolls

- Butter Orange Marmalade Jelly Jam
- Fruit Cocktail Shrimp Cocktail

The waiter serves you as before. You take what you like from the serving dish, or the waiter can lay the food on the plate for you.

When this course is past, the main part of the dinner is brought up on cart number 3. The items are kept hot by the hot-plates discussed above, which makes possible serving such things as these, for instance:

- Roast Lamb, Brown Gravy or Mint Sauce
- Breaded Veal Cutlet, Cream Sauce
- Chicken and Noodles
- Fillet of Flounder, Tartar Sauce
- French Fried Potatoes Roasted Potatoes
- New Snap Beans Creamed Cauliflower

If you prefer your coffee with your meal, it is brought to you from a side-board in the dining room, where several electric hot plates and medium-sized glass percolators stand ready to brew the beverage quickly.

When you have finished your main course, your soiled dishes are removed and the cart brings the salad course: hearts of lettuce, thoroughly marinated in French dressing; crimson tomato salad;

sparkling lime salads; endive stuffed with Roquefort cheese; emerald water-cress, etc., etc. The appeal of this colorful, aromatic display of salads is hard to resist.

Finally comes the dessert cart, with such tempting items as genuine old-fashioned cocoanut cake, cookies, creams, mousses, snow pudding, ice-box confections and the like—delicate things we all fall for hard, once they hit the eye.

If you will visualize the sort of service I have tried to describe, you will realize the possibilities this "rolling cafeteria" plan offers in lifting the dining rooms of country clubs out of their deficits to profitable returns. It will destroy the Goliath that has seemed so formidable.

But remember: as I hinted last month, this rolling cafeteria can succeed only when backed up with proper menus, appealing to the eye and taste, fastidiously presented, with constant change in the items offered.

It is well known that wherever cafeterias have been installed in clubs they have been profitable. Here is a cafeteria shorn of its commonplace appearance and eliminating the unpopular feature of turning every guest into a waiter. Economy and style are combined in a fashion so tempting that the average check is higher than the usual table d'hote check, and with no one to blame but the man who serves himself!

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GOLFDOM would appreciate opinions from readers on the practical aspects of the "rolling cafeteria" plan. Are there any mechanical difficulties that would prevent successful operation?

NEW CREDIT FORM

Club and Ball Makers Have Simplified Pro Record

A NEW STANDARD form for first order report on credit has been adopted by the golf club and golf ball manufacturers associations, with the intention of simplifying the matter of a pro establishing his credit rating on a confidential basis. Use of this data at present is confined to members of the two associations, but as these associations include practically all the leading makers of clubs and balls, the matter of establishing credit is simplified by the association report.

Pros have complained about telephone requests from unknown sources for credit

information, and in our opinion the fellows have a sound basis for complaint. There can be no holler from a pro business man about furnishing information necessary to establish credit to the companies with whom he is dealing, or intending to deal. Every other business has to do it, and whatever complaint some of the laddies have to make on that score leaves us rather cold. After all it's the seller's cash that is invested in the deal, and he has a right to know when—or if—he is going to get paid. In our own business the folks have to know about us before they sell, and in the club and ball manufacturers business they buy on credit only when the seller knows that the buyer is good.

Of course a lot of the pros during the last couple of years have sold to members and been stuck, simply because they could not get tough about collecting or were compelled to accept as 100 per cent recommendation the fact that credit of the member was rated good when he was passed by the clubs' membership committees.

It would be a good thing for the pros and the manufacturers if the club and ball associations' credit data were made more generally available as pros are bothered and bewildered by requests for credit information from makers of bags and accessories who are not members of the club and ball groups.

New Form Decided Change

On the old form of the association there was requested a statement of financial condition that stumped not a few of the fellows desiring purchases on a charge basis. There also was requested three character references, statement of purchases made from 3 companies on open terms and some personal data.

The simplified new first order credit form calls for data about terms of contract with club, years of connection with present club and previous 5 years' service, ownership of home, automobile and other property, married, number of children, member of P. G. A. Six spaces for data on other purchases from manufacturers on open terms.

Some of the fellows have been wondering what this credit information business is all about and have written GOLFDOM for the close-up. Our dope is that properly and promptly filling out the forms when so requested by the accredited representatives of the club and ball manufacturers associations' members is an entirely correct action for the pros.