

Dinner - Wagons Permit Quick Service With Minimum Staff

By HELEN EWING BENJAMIN

IN MARCH GOLFDOM was described the dinner-wagon plan of dining room service. It outlined the advantages it offers along the lines of economy and distinctiveness. In effect, the plan permits cafeteria service and cafeteria economies in the dining room, yet these two outstanding paths to profits are so well disguised that members regard the service as more distinctive than the customary serving method.

As explained in the preceding article, the dinner-wagon plan consists of a series of carts, one for each course of the dinner. A waitress wheels the cart alongside the table, the member chooses the food he wants from the choices displayed on the wagon top and serves himself or is served by the waitress. One loading of the cart will take care of 24 servings before a trip to the kitchen is necessary.

Like a cafeteria, the food is ordered visually, rather than from a printed menu. Like a club cafeteria, this reduces sharply the number of menu items essential to satisfy all tastes, because ordering from a menu is entirely a mental process, while ordering from the food itself brings in the senses of sight and taste to aid the guest make up his mind. Dishes which do not appeal on a printed menu often are exactly what a guest wants, once he has seen the food itself.

The big difference between cafeteria service and dinner-wagon service is the difference between Mohammed going to the mountain and the mountain coming to Mohammed. In a cafeteria, the guests must walk past the food; under the dinner-wagon plan, the food is wheeled past the comfortably seated guest.

What Plan Will Do

If this plan be properly applied, service costs can be cut nearly in half. This is obvious when you recall that one dinner-wagon serves 24 guests and therefore eliminates many time-consuming trips to the kitchen and back. If a large percentage of kitchen trips can be eliminated it is obvious that the same employe can take

care of more guests, which means that your dining-room crew can be definitely reduced. The diagrams will make this clear.

In March we mentioned the special silver service that fits in with the dinner-wagon plan. A complete and homelike service of platters, vegetable dishes, etc., it keeps food hot for two hours or more by means of a sealed in heat-retaining substance. Put on a dinner-wagon, it becomes a rolling cafeteria in effect and with a style equal to that found in the best London clubs.

The very manner of the service stirs an economic psychology, for it excludes all sorts of unimportant display considered necessary on a menu by offering only four meats, and four vegetables, and their sauces. Limiting the menu in this manner makes perfection of preparing food possible by excluding unnecessary arrangements in the kitchen. There is time to do well what is necessary to be done, and there is time to cook the food in small quantities.

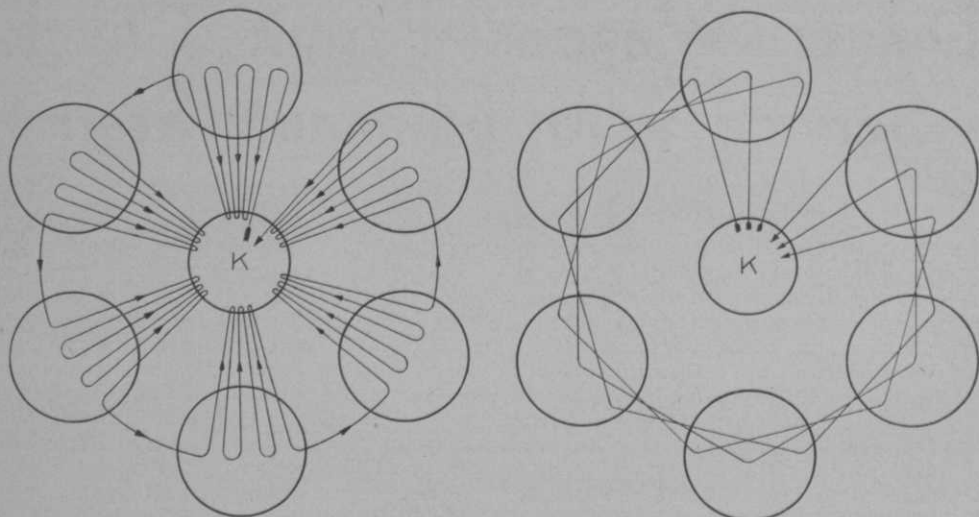
Equipment Cost Reasonable

Compared with the cost of installing a cafeteria, the silver service is relatively cheap, yet it carries all the cafeteria advantages. Food is prepared in the form usual at home, instead of swimming in unappetizing fluids. The beauty of the service is notable.

In addition to the special silver service to keep the food hot on the dinner wagons, there is also a china service on the market which is equally efficient but somewhat less "finished" in appearance than the silver. It is about a sixth cheaper and the china plates are of course subject to breakage, but they perform the same function and make those savings possible that we mentioned before—where the menu is properly planned.

Typical Peak Meal Described

Let us now see how the dinner-wagon plan would work in a large club dining room. Take a Saturday night "peak load"



These diagrams illustrate the saving in trips between kitchen and tables under the dinner-wagon plan, as contrasted with the usual tray service. In both diagrams, "K" represents kitchen; other circles are tables of four guests each.

On left, trips waiter would take to serve 3-course dinner to these guests. For each table, these trips: (1) to kitchen with order, (2) bring first course, (3) return to kitchen, (4) bring second course, (5) return to kitchen, (6) bring third course. Total for 6 tables, 36 trips.

On right, trips needed under dinner-wagon plan. For each of the three courses a wagon is rolled from kitchen, visits each table, and is returned to kitchen. Total trips, 6.

of, say, 400 members and guests. Most of them are going to expect to be served between 6:30 and 8:30. You have 120 minutes in which to care for these people, or about three a minute during these two hours. How are you going to accomplish this without a swarm of waiters?

It is just 6:00 o'clock. Two members come in, look about and choose a table. Then, just as they are seating themselves, three more members enter and choose a table on the opposite side of the dining room.

In the average club, *two* waiters would immediately hop to it, but not under the dinner-wagon plan. Instead, *one* waitress comes forward, pushing toward the two guests who first entered a beautifully set linen covered wagon loaded with plates of canapes, hors d'oeuvres, breads, butter, jam, pickles, ginger ale, punch, etc.

The guests choose by sight and are served by the waitress, or serve themselves. A tiny vase with a single red flower in it is set on the table (this is an important detail, as will be apparent later) and the waitress crosses to the second group.

Notice that it is not necessary for her to return to the kitchen; her wagon holds

sufficient food for 24 members, and as others enter she goes to them at once, either serving them or allowing them to serve themselves—and always leaving the vase with the red flower. Before she turns her wagon toward the pantry, 24 have been served.

About the time the first group of members have finished whatever they chose from the first wagon, a second waitress enters the room with a wagon containing the second course of the dinner—soups, soup cups and saucers. She has been preceded by a bus boy who removes the used plates and silver.

She acts under the direction of a skilled head waitress, is sent to the two guests who entered first, removes the red flower from the vase, substitutes a white one and then serves the soup. She passes on to other tables, wherever the red flowers show. The head waitress is like a train dispatcher, constantly alert that all flows smoothly and that no table waits overlong for attention, whatever the course it may have just finished.

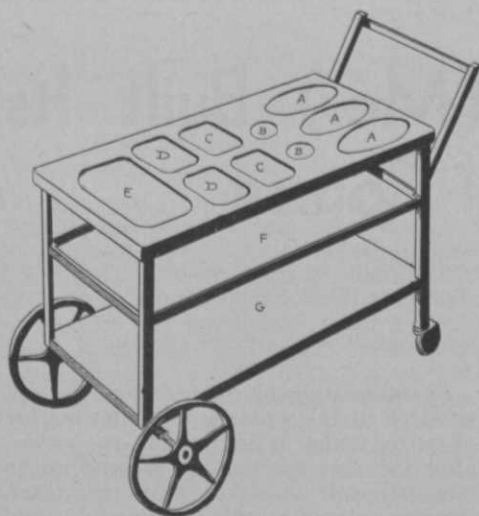
At the proper time, a third waitress enters. She follows the white flowers, takes them up and substitutes pink. No. 3 has

the real food—the roast, the entrées, the vegetables, the sauces and the gravies. Her wagon carries enough for 24 hungry guests.

Suddenly there is a rush—many members come all at once. Three wagons appear with canapes and red flowers. There are six wagons at work, each ready to serve 24 people. They are taking care of several hundred guests and are doing it beautifully, without a ruffle.

And so through the meal the courses change and the wagons follow the colors. There is no haste, no confusion, no overlooking of guests, no favoritism. The service is complete, skillful, modern, distinctive and inexpensive to install. Six waitresses, a head waitress and a couple of bus-boys care for a rush of 400 people.

Part of these girls may be extras who



Here is a rough sketch of the sort of cart that should be used under the dinner-wagon plan. Location of main course menu items are indicated on the top, as follows: AAA—entrees; BB—gravy and sauce dishes; CC—potatoes; DD—vegetables; E roast.

Shelf F, which is hidden from diners by overhanging linen, holds accessories and can be used to carry an extra supply of the more popular entree items.

come Saturdays and Sundays and other days as called. Unlike men waiters (who are men waiters, by gosh, and nothing else, even when the painter needs a ladder held) waitresses willingly shell peas and cut beans and otherwise make themselves useful in the early hours of the day. This makes a small dining room crew possible.

With seven or eight wagons (one or two of them always in the kitchen in the process of being reloaded) club members can have the perfection of unhurried, completely satisfying service.

Clubs showing dining room deficits in the neighborhood of \$3,000—and there are a lot of them, trick bookkeeping notwithstanding—can spend a lot less than that and put their dining rooms on a profitable basis if they really desire to do so. This is not a theory nor an experiment. The Edgewater Beach apartments saved tremendously in cost of service and reduced food waste by half, according to Mr. Adamson, manager. The Claridge hotel, Atlantic City, has found nothing to surpass the silver service with its simple beauty and swank, plus its heat-retaining feature.

Club cafeterias consistently make money, but cannot offer the comforts of a well-run dining room. Club dining rooms do offer these comforts, but ninety-five in one hundred lose money.

Why not combine the two by means of the dinner wagon type of service, which in effect puts a cafeteria in your dining room without your members realizing the fact?

"Buddy Poppy" Sale Set for May's Last Week

A NNUAL "BUDDY POPPY" sale, sponsored by Veterans of Foreign Wars, this year will be conducted during week of Memorial Day. Poppies are made by disabled and needy ex-service men and proceeds are used for welfare and relief work among veterans, their widows and orphans. The campaign gets a strong boost in the golf field as pros claim larger percentage of war veterans than any other class of professional sportsmen.

S EVERAL hundred hotel guests were recently interviewed to find out what they liked best to eat, with the following results, listed in order of preference:

Soups: Vegetable, tomato, pea, chicken.

Meats: Steaks, chicken, roast beef, pot roast.

Seafoods: Filet of sole, halibut, salmon steak, lobster, whitefish.

Salads: Tomato, combination, raw vegetable, head lettuce, fruit.

Desserts: Ice cream, pie, gelatine, short-cake.

Beverages: Coffee, milk, tea, coffee substitutes.