

EATING IS THE BIGGEST INDUSTRY IN BUENOS AIRES

It Comes Before Business in the Argentine Capital, Which Has Supplanted Berlin as a City of Gourmandizing—When Business Interferes With Eating the Argentine Cuts Out Business

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10 A.M.

THE Buenos Aires waiter was trying to make out his newly arrived Yankee customer, and the latter floundered in the deep water of beginner's Spanish for the first time.

There was a difference of language, yes.

But the real difficulty lay in difference of viewpoint concerning eating.

For the Yankee, ordering a light lunch, New York style, wanted one simple dish, an entree, with a bit of salad, and then a sweet and coffee. Which as lunch is absolutely unthinkable in Buenos Aires—absolutamente!

The Yankee wanted to snatch a bite to eat and get back to business. But the Buenos Aires idea is just the other way round—to do a little business and then get back to eating.

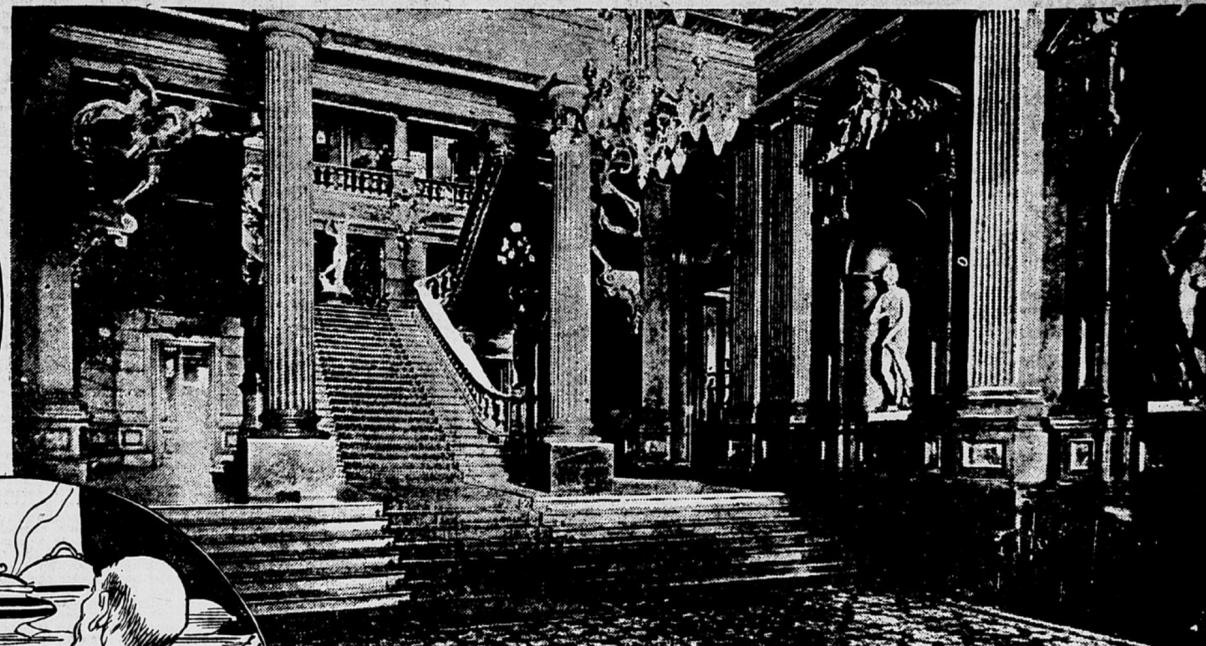
In days of yore the gourmandizing capital of the world was unquestionably Berlin, where the population started in the morning with several breakfasts, first from the fingers, then reaching the "fork breakfast" and mingling business with meals and lunches all day until far into the night, when business was happily outdistanced and eating prevailed.

Buenos Aires now has very good claims as the capital of a new League of Gourmets, first because its eating habits are strikingly like those of Berlin, and, secondly, because, as the gateway of one of the greatest food-producing regions in the world, with only the surface of its rich soil scratched, it stands the best chance of being a permanent capital.

The Yankee wanted an entree and salad and a sweet.



12 NOON



Interior of the Jockey Club, Buenos Aires

cured in the Smithfield style, tongue, roast beef, game, delicious Argentine pate in the form of castles, meat jellies, stuffed eggs, salads and relishes. The waiters bring assortment after assortment, displaying flambe to the cold eye of the shted Argentine and heaping his plate until he says "Bastante!" Being a Latin, he can say "Bastante!" silently, with his left little finger or right eyebrow.

which is Argentine idiom for very small. To the Argentines, however, flambe is only the beginning of a meal. Then come soup, fish, spaghetti, a hot-meat course, a vegetable course served alone, with chicken later, followed by a sweet and coffee and a cordial.

The soup is no dishwater affair, but a delicious mixture of several well-cooked vegetables or a thick cream soup. The fish is not the scrap of tasteless flounder filet served at a New York banquet, but one of the local fishes of the Rio Plata, cooked whole, which the waiter brings in, cutting files on the spot. The spaghetti is invariably called "tagliolini," and is usually made fresh from Argentine wheat and perhaps colored green with spinach. The meat may be a delicious casseroles dish, followed by a single vegetable as a slight interruption of the steady flow of meat, and then comes the chicken, which calls for description all by itself. Only when the sweets are reached does the bill-of-fare begin to break down, for pie and ice cream and like desserts are not common in Buenos Aires, and the "dulce" is often replaced with cheese or fruit.

"puchero gallino," slices of salt pork, sections of savory little Spanish sausages, potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, slices of winter squash, cabbage, rice and garbanzas, or Spanish chick-peas. In the restaurants these are boiled separately and arranged on the platter, but true puchero is one made at home, with all the ingredients cooked together.

The Buenos Aires restaurateur not only understands chicken more intimately than any other host in the world, but has an admirable frankness concerning the bird. Chicken is simply chicken with us, whether it be rooster or hen, and regardless of age. But a young chicken on the Buenos Aires bill-of-fare is always "pollo," or pullet, and the more mature bird is frankly listed as "gallina," or hen. Like the Jew, who long ago settled this question of good chicken in his Mosaic law, the Argentine will buy chicken only on the hoof—the live birds are freshly killed for the table and cold-storage poultry is unknown. Gallina is boiled tender, while Buenos Aires pollo can best be described in the words of Edouard, an expert:

"It is a young chicken of either sex that never gets up until 11 a. m. and then, after taking its roll and coffee, goes back to bed again."

Breakfast consists of a roll and coffee. Then there is an hour at the office and two hours for a hearty meal, during which many business places close. The Americans and British commute home to lunch, reaching Belgrano, the Brooklyn of Buenos Aires, in twenty minutes by train. From 2 to 5 the offices are open again, and then everybody goes out to tea, which is a real meal, consisting of tea, coffee or chocolate, with liberal helpings of sandwiches and cakes.

At this meal the true son of Argentina really gets down to the business of eating.

On Sunday people gather and devote two hours to this function. It absolutely spoils the new arrival's dinner, but at 8 o'clock the Argentines sit down to the heaviest meal of the day and then go to the opera or theatre, where performances seldom begin before 9 or 10 o'clock. After the show the restaurants fill again, but here, rather curiously, the Argentine appetite balks.

The restaurants of Buenos Aires are many and of a surprisingly good character, with plenty of middle-class places where well-cooked food is served at reasonable prices. Like the restaurants of Paris, there seem to be none of the monstrous establishments for spoiling good food so common in the United States and England. But Buenos Aires is not in the least cosmopolitan. It has innumerable establishments where its combination of French, Italian and Spanish cooking are all pretty much alike.

The cabaret has not yet reached Buenos Aires, and perhaps never will, for it is hard to imagine the Argentine gourmet interrupting the many courses of his lunch or dinner to rise and dance a foxtrot.

The business day of Buenos Aires is arranged with eating first and business secondary. The rising hour is late, 9 to 10 o'clock in the morning, because the Argentine capital is truly an all-night town, with restaurants filled at 2 a. m., an hour when New York, though widely advertising its midnight frolics, is safely abed.

The day winds up with tea, coffee, chocolate, wine or liquors, accompanied by just a bite of delicatessen. The Argentine is then willing to call it a day, and quit—and it has certainly been some day in a gastronomic sense from 9 o'clock in the morning until 1 a. m.



5 P.M.



8 P.M.



1 A.M.



One of Buenos Aires's modern hotels

What the Buenos Aires waiter considers a lunch is something like this: First the "flambe," or cold meat, the indispensable overture to every Buenos Aires meal. This is strikingly like the "kaltespeisen" of Berlin, where fifty cold

dishes decorated the entrance of every restaurant, fish and lobsters frozen in blocks of ice, color effects of caviar and mayonnaise, egg and sausage, pate and cold meat, and three waiters appeared on one side and four on the other, each

bearing several dishes on his arm, and heaped your plate until you said "Also!" The Buenos Aires array of flambe is somewhat simpler, but includes delicious slices of breast meat from the juiciest turkey in the world, then shavings of ham

Had the American ordered simply flambe and then paid the check it would have made an ample lunch, but the waiter would have concluded that he was a poor man and felt sympathetic, and apologized in bringing the check, smilingly protesting "Muy chico, señor."

The Argentine puchero is more on the order of a super-New England boiled dinner. Even when ordered for one person, the waiter brings it on an enormous platter, with the different ingredients carefully arranged. It consists of boiled beef, supplemented by boiled chicken in a

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