
The Geographical Origin of the Restaurant: The Urban Environment

1.1. From bouillons...

Originally, the “restaurant” was a cheap broth prepared and enjoyed in the city. Pierre Andrieu thus evokes the craze for the “divine restaurant”:

“The term then applied to bouillons, one of which, the ‘divine restaurant’, was for a long time the most popular. It consisted of a mixture of poultry and very finely minced butcher’s meat, distilled in a still with pearl barley, dry roses and Damascus grapes. In the 18th Century, a doctor named Clarens simplified the formula. According to him, we were to limit ourselves to cooking fat poultry in a little flavored water. Clarens’ recipe was successful and it was this recipe that, when commercialized, was exploited by Boulanger, known as Champ d’Oiseaux, rue des Poulies, at the site of the current rue du Louvre.” [AND 55, p. 26, author’s translation]

In 1765, the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* defined the restaurant as “a food that restores, that repairs forces [...]. A restaurant in particular is called a strong restorative consommé, a meat press”. Jean-Robert Pitte points out that:

“Since the late Middle Ages, the word ‘restaurant’ has meant these rich bouillons consisting of poultry, beef, various roots, onions, herbs and, depending on the recipe, spices, candy sugar, toasted bread or barley, butter, as well as products as unusual in appearance as dried rose petals, Damascus grapes, amber, etc.” [PIT 96, p. 771, author’s translation]

1.2. ... to the establishment

Gradually, the name of the dish came to designate the place where it was tasted:

“The worldwide success of the word ‘restaurant’ gives the French a just cause for pride. First used to designate a rich and invigorating bouillon, then various small, robust dishes designed to restore weak health or, quite simply, energy reduced by fatigue and hunger, it was only applied at the end of the 18th Century to the establishment where they were served. The founding event of this institution took place in 1765, rue des Poulies, near the Louvre, where a certain Boulanger, known as Champ d’Oiseaux, served ‘restaurants’, i.e. bouillons, but also sheep’s feet in white sauce with a portion under the sign written in Latin...: *‘Venite ad me, omnes qui stomacho laboratis, et ego vos restaurabo’*.¹ [PIT 91, p. 157, author’s translation]

The situation reflected Boulanger’s business sense and restaurants grew rapidly. In his *Histoire du restaurant en France*, Pierre Andrieu quotes, on this subject, P. de la Mésangère:

“Besides the fact that Boulanger sold bouillons, there was food at home, but since he was not a caterer, he could not serve stew. Instead, he served poultry with coarse salt, fresh eggs, etc., and this was served without a tablecloth on small marble tables. Other restaurateurs followed his example, including Wauxhall, at the Colosseum and all the assembly and public celebration venues. Novelty, fashion and above all, high prices accredited them, because a person who would not have dared to sit at a guesthouse’s table would easily pay for the same expensive dinner at the restaurant!” [AND 55, p. 26, author’s translation]

Although the restaurant’s geographical origin is Parisian, Jean-Robert Pitte nevertheless points out that it shares common characteristics with London’s taverns:

“As with many cultural changes, the French restaurant does not have a simple genealogy. It also has English ancestry. The taverns on the other side of the Channel, i.e. the establishments where wine is served and which are pitted against brasseries, are often elegant and famous. One of the most famous and refined London taverns of the 18th Century was owned in the 1670s by a son of a president in the

¹ Come to me, all of you whose stomachs are in distress, and I will restore you.

Bordeaux Parliament, Mr. de Pontac. The wine produced by his father on his estate in Haut-Brion was consumed there.” [PIT 91, p. 158, author’s translation]

The name given to one of the first famous Parisian restaurants, *La Grande Taverne de Londres*, opened by Antoine Beauvilliers in 1782, and sometimes considered as the first “grand restaurant”, illustrates this influence:

“Antoine Beauvilliers brought the profession to its pinnacle. He was also an essential link in the historical geography of French gastronomy, as he was one of the first officier de bouche (chef) of a prince – the Count of Provence, the future Louis XVIII – to establish his own business [...] Beauvilliers [...] opened a chic restaurant where everybody who was anybody was running around and enabled the high court cuisine to take to the streets. He first established himself at 26 rue de Richelieu, under the name of *La Grande Taverne de Londres*, then a stone’s throw away, but in the heart of fashionable Paris, in the Valois gallery at the Palais-Royal.” [PIT 91, p. 160, author’s translation]

In *Paris à table*, Eugène Briffault highlights Antoine Beauvilliers’ reputation at the Palais-Royal:

“Beauvilliers was the one that first attracted the most people. He never made his mark as a chef, but he had a quality that is nowadays considered extinct: he was entirely focused on the people who came to his house for dinner, and constantly went through his rooms, to make sure that his diners were happy. At the slightest doubt, he would have one dish replaced by another, head down to his kitchens, and loudly scold the careless worker.” [BRI 03, p. 91, author’s translation]

For Rebecca L. Spang, Mathurin Roze de Chantoiseau was the first restaurateur. She places the invention of the restaurant at the heart of an original socioeconomic strategy:

“The ‘invention’ of the restaurant, the creation of a new market sphere of hospitality and taste, was but one component of Roze’s plan to fix the economy, repair trade, and restore the health to the body politic [...]. Nevertheless, Roze’s role in the invention of the restaurant is particularly significant, for it epitomizes (if only by the variety of its

projects) the restaurant's place in intricate networks of market expansion and commercial growth. Like others of his era, the first restaurateur saw the long-stigmatized mechanisms of trade (the circulation of goods and the stimulation of desires) as potential conduits of social benefit and national improvement. Roze de Chantoiseau, who invented the restaurant while running an information office, attempting to abolish the national debt, and editing a commercial directory, was hardly unique in the range of his interests. In 1766, when this first restaurateur opened his doors, culinary issues were often incorporated into a wide range of discussions." [SPA 00, pp. 13–14]

She thus insists on the complementary professional activity of communication and publications of Mathurin Roze de Chantoiseau, who published in 1769 *Almanach général d'indication d'adresse personnelle et domicile fixe de Six Corps, Arts et Métiers*². François-Régis Gaudry specifies:

"This directory listed, in alphabetical order, several thousand merchants, traders, craftsmen and entrepreneurs who each demonstrated talent and initiative in their own field [...] Similarly, a supplement to the almanac listing the new caterers indicated 'Roze, the First Restaurateur'. Smart and intuitive, Mathurin Roze de Chantoiseau was actually intelligent enough to play on two sides to support his business: he was Chantoiseau the author-publisher on the one hand, and Roze the restaurateur, on the other. Since 1766, the restaurant was located in the Hôtel d'Aligre, rue Saint-Honoré, at the same address as its publishing house." [GAU 06, pp. 21–22]

In addition, Rebecca L. Spang points out that: "Like any number of these enterprising authors and would-be reformers, Roze de Chantoiseau frequented the aristocratic and administrative circles in Paris." [SPA 00, p. 15]

But who was the first restaurateur then? Boulanger or Roze de Chantoiseau? An answer is provided by François-Régis Gaudry:

"The famous Boulanger consigned to the dungeons of history and Mathurin Roze de Chantoiseau suddenly presented as the undisputed inventor of the restaurant? Not so sure, because it may be that the two people are actually only one. Indeed, in several texts of the time, Boulanger was also called 'Champ d'Oiseau', a nickname strangely close to 'Chantoiseau'." [GAU 06, p. 21, author's translation]

2 Which roughly translates to "The General Almanac of Personal Address and Permanent Residence of Six Corps, Arts and Crafts".

Eugène Briffault, for his part, attributes Lamy as the first creator of the restaurant: “The first restaurateur in Paris was a man named Lamy. He opened his private rooms in one of the dark and narrow passages that surrounded the Palais-Royal at the time.” [BRI 03, p. 91, author’s translation]. In *Le mangeur du XIX^e siècle*, Jean-Paul Aron confirms: “The first authentic restaurateur, Lamy, served very ordinary dishes around 1773.” [ARO 89, p. 19, author’s translation]

Rebecca L. Spang also mentions the opening of an establishment run by the restaurateur Minet:

“In March 1767, *L’Avantcoureur* (The Forerunner), a journal dedicated to innovation in the arts, the sciences, and ‘any other field that makes life more agreeable,’ announced that a new type of establishment had opened in Paris’s rue des Poulies. The new business specialized in ‘excellent consommés or restaurants always carefully warmed in a hot water bath.’ These restaurants were available at all hours, at reasonable prices, and were served in gold-rimmed, white faience dishes.” [SPA 00, p. 34]

The restaurant is an expressive form of Parisian elite social demand for dietetics and taste:

“As much a scientific innovation as a culinary curiosity, the opening of the first restaurant responded to the 18th Century elite culture’s preoccupations with the pursuit of health as well as its fascination with cuisine.” [SPA 00, p. 26]

François-Régis Gaudry insists on this dietary interest by pointing out that Mathurin Roze de Chantoiseau first named his restaurant the “*Maison de santé*” (literally meaning the health home):

“This name, which came to disappear a few years later, betrayed the medical mission of the first restaurants. Roze prepared, for the attention of the urban elite who suffered from vapours, miasmas and bronchial weaknesses, ‘reconstituting bouillons’ which he served in small cups. These consumers drew their success from their nutritious and digestible properties because they knew how to capture the rich flavor of meat and vegetables while presenting them in a liquid form.” [GAU 06, p. 22, author’s translation]

The restaurateur Minet offered fresh eggs, fine butter, jellies and “cream of rice and gruel from Brittany with fat and milk”. The restaurateur Vacossin, rue de Grenelle, served cream cheese, fruit, semolina, Palais-Royal biscuits, capons with coarse salt and “lunches with fine herbs”³. In the first restaurants, it was also possible to eat rice or vermicelli soups, macaroni, fruit purées, etc. According to Rebecca L. Spang, the craze for these “healthy” dishes was linked to a sociocultural context under Rousseauist influence:

“Rousseau’s sensitive characters inhabited a milk-and-honey world of (comparatively expensive) fruits and dairy products. When restaurants served ‘simple’ bouillons, they similarly contributed to the construction of a mythical version of sincere, healthful country life which proved acceptable to an urban, elite population.” [SPA 00, p. 42]

It is an urban cult of sensitivity:

“As an emotional or intellectual state with physical manifestations, the cult of sensibility also conjured up its own spaces: the farm where Marie Antoinette played milkmaid, Rousseau’s grave, and the restaurant. The restaurant introduced Rousseau’s desires – not just the paradoxically refined simplicity of his ideal meals, but the equally perplexing publicity of his privacy – into the marketplace.” [SPA 00, p. 63]

Thus, since their invention, restaurants, these urban places, mainly frequented by urban diners, have produced and disseminated discourses and, even more so, gastronomic images of the countryside and nature.

In this Parisian, urban, sensory context, the restaurant was originally both a public and a private place where consumption and tasting practices took place:

“The restaurant was a publicly private place: Minet promised the weak-chested ‘a public place where they can go to take their consommé’, but (and in no less certain terms) another restaurateur advertised his establishment as perfectly suited to ‘those who would hardly want to eat in public’. Neither expansively ‘public’ nor narrowly ‘private’, the restaurant offered the possibility for a public display of private self-absorption.” [SPA 00, pp. 86–87]

3 Weekly sheets *L'Avantcoureur* of 1767, quoted by Patrick Ramboug [RAM 10, p. 190].

Lounges and staff met this need for privacy and even confidentiality.

Therefore, the restaurant initially demonstrated original properties. It was frequented by urban diners who were looking for quality products, sometimes rare or even luxurious, rigorously chosen, skillfully cooked and carefully served. François-Régis Gaudry underlined the diversity of restaurant customers:

“The restaurant welcomed a heterogeneous clientele: merchants, intellectuals, aristocrats, actors, financiers, officers... But the greatest sociological innovation lied in the appearance of women, seduced by the delicacy of the dishes and the intimacy of the private rooms.”
[GAU 06, p. 25, author’s translation]

According to Eugène Briffault:

“The establishment of the restaurateurs was a social fact. Under the regime in which they succeeded, good food was the privilege of opulence; the restaurateurs made it accessible to everyone. A man who could, once in his life, spend twenty or twenty-five francs on his dinner, if he knew how to choose his dishes, and if he sat at the table of a first-rate restaurateur, was treated better than if he dined with a prince: he was served with as much splendour as in a palace; he ordered at will; his taste and desire knew no boundaries; free from all consideration, he obeyed only the whims of his fantasy and his delicacy. Restaurateurs therefore took a great step forward in social equality, established by the community of enjoyment much more than by theories that would never succeed in placing the poor on an equal footing with the rich.” [BRI 03, pp. 92–93, author’s translation]

In a prepared, comfortable, peaceful and clean room, diners enjoyed their varied dishes set up at individual tables and, most often, tablecloths⁴. “They thus avoided promiscuity and could make confidential or courteous comments”, emphasized Jean-Robert Pitte [PIT 91, p. 159, author’s translation]. It was even possible to choose your table. The richness of restaurant decorations was significant.

Diners “were served individual portions of dishes that they chose from a framed sheet of paper, before resolving the ‘paying card’, i.e. the bill” [PIT 91, p. 159, author’s translation]. Thus, the menu was born, presenting the prices. Food was served on demand all day long. Wine was no longer used only to quench your thirst:

⁴ In *Paris à table*, Eugène Briffault emphasizes: “Originally, the restaurateur was not allowed to put a tablecloth on these tables. They were covered with a green or jasper waxcloth” [BRI 03, p. 91, author’s translation].

it came to accompany dishes and allowed for food and wine pairings. Water could be served in bottles. The service remained attentive to the expectations and demands of diners.

Indeed, Rebecca L. Spang insists on the emergence of a new form of manners that gave primacy to the individual and to their needs, desires and pleasures:

“The restaurant gave new significance to the individual’s emotions, utterances, and actions, and elaborated a whole new logic of sociability and conviviality. While the serving of salutary dishes was the restaurant’s initial *raison d’être*, fans of the restaurant spoke with equal enthusiasm about the many other delights available there.” [SPA 00, pp. 66–67]

The restaurant therefore became a place of free choice where food intake was motivated, desired and individualized. According to Tristan Hordé, the restaurant appeared in a context in which the idea of the individual was affirmed: “the idea of the ‘individual’ was imposed, at least in the dominant urban social classes” [HOR 17, p. 12, author’s translation]. Then, the restaurateur responded to the expression of individual needs and desires related to taste; the taste preferences of the individual eater. Rebecca L. Spang points out that:

“Some twenty years after they were first established, restaurants no longer specialized in providing delicately healthful soups to a genteelly weak-chested clientele but in catering to individual tastes. While the *traiteur* fed large groups, the restaurateur offered single servings and small, intimate tables. [...]. The restaurateur invited his guest to sit at his or her own table, to consult his or her own needs and desires, to concentrate on that most fleeting and difficult to universalize sense: taste.” [SPA 00, p. 75]

Therefore, the diner held an essential role: they made a real *choice*. They took on a “buyer” role. The birth of the restaurant thus marked the transition from a situation where the eater was an agent (human operator or agent capable of voluntary actions and their own initiatives but possessing no strategic competence: he/she was not a decision-maker and even less a designer) to one where he/she became an actor (agent with subjective interiority, intentionality, autonomous strategic capacity and an ability to express oneself) [LUS 03, p. 39]. The buyer (the diner) of this particular service, that of catering, was therefore at the initiative and design stage, insofar as there was a simultaneity of production and consumption. Thus, the diner became a “coproducer” of the catering service with the chef.

DEFINITION.— Services are: “in the broadest sense, all economically productive activities that do not include the manufacture of material objects. In a narrow sense, this whole, excluding exchange activities. Services are in fact an economic and spatial phenomenon quite apart in the production of wealth. Unlike material goods, services are only realized by consuming them: the usual production/consumption distinction does not work very well. The production of a service involves the combination of three elements: a material basis, a contact staff and a customer. There is therefore joint production by the customer and the company. The economist Jean Galdrey proposed the concept of ‘servuction’ to reflect this specificity. It follows that a service is not tangible and cannot be stored.” [STO 03, pp. 834–835, author’s translation]

How is the concentration of restaurants reflected? How did restaurants spread in Paris?

