

FARHA TERNIKAR

# BRUNCH

A  
HISTORY



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“This engaging, informative book traces the history of brunch from its origins as a hunt breakfast for the British elite to the hipster meal par excellence. But the author’s scope extends beyond the Anglo-American world to cover brunch in Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. Her impressive array of sources includes magazines, cookbooks, movies, music, and novels, which make for a delightful account of the meal that has been called one of life’s great pleasures.” —**Colleen Taylor Sen**, food writer and historian; coauthor/cowriter, *Street Food Around the World: An Encyclopedia of Food and Culture* and *Food Culture in India and Curry: Global History*

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# Brunch

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To Dad, who taught me his love of aloo paratha and keema, weetabix, and marmalade and biscuits. I wish you were here to share brunch.

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# Series Foreword

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Custom becomes second nature, and this especially true of meals. We expect to eat them at a certain time and place, and we have a set of scripted foods considered appropriate for each. Bacon, eggs, and toast are breakfast; sandwiches are lunch; meat, potatoes, and vegetables are dinner, followed by dessert. Breakfast for dinner is so much fun precisely because it is out of the ordinary and transgressive. But meal patterns were not always this way. In the Middle Ages people ate two meals, the larger in the morning. Today the idea of a heavy meal with meat and wine at 11:00 AM strikes us as strange and decidedly unpleasant. Likewise when abroad, the food that people eat, at what seems to us the wrong time of day, can be shocking. Again, our customs have become so ingrained that we assume they are natural, correct, and biologically sound.

The Meals series will demonstrate exactly the opposite. Not only have meal times changed but the menu as well, both through history and around the globe. Only a simple bowl of soup with a crust of bread for supper? That's where the name comes from. Our dinner, coming from *disner* in Old French, *disjeunare* in Latin, actually means to break fast and was eaten in the morning. Each meal also has its own unique characteristics that evolve over time. We will see the invention of the picnic and barbecue, the gradual adoption of lunch as a new midday meal, and even certain meals practiced as hallowed institutions in some places but scarcely at all elsewhere, such as tea—the meal, not the drink. Often food items suddenly appear in a meal as quintessential, such as cold breakfast cereal, the invention of men like Kellogg and Post. Or they disappear, like oysters for breakfast. Sometimes an entire meal springs from nowhere under unique social conditions, like brunch.

Of course, the decay of the family meal is a topic that deeply concerns us, as people catch a quick bite at their desk or on the go, or eat with their eyes glued to the television set. If eating is one of the greatest pleasures in life, one has to wonder what it says about us when we wolf down a meal in a few minutes flat or when no one talks at the dinner table. Still, meal-time traditions persist for special occasions. They are the time we remind ourselves of who we are and where we come from, when grandma's special lasagna comes to the table for a Sunday dinner, or a Passover Seder is set exactly the same way it has been for thousands of years. We treasure these food rituals precisely because they keep us rooted in a rapidly changing world.

The Meals series examines the meal as both a historical construct and a global phenomenon. Each volume anatomizes a single meal, bringing its social and cultural meaning into sharp focus and explaining the customs and manners of various people in context. Each volume also looks closely at the foods we commonly include and why. In the end I hope you will never take your meal-time customs for granted again.

Ken Albala





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# Introduction

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Lobster Benedict, fried chicken and waffles, or dim sum all exemplify the decadence and diversity of brunch. Who brunches and what we enjoy for brunch have changed since brunch's recent invention, but brunch remains the weekend meal of comfort and indulgence.

Brunch is a somewhat modern ritual, with its first mention coming from Guy Beringer in an 1895 magazine article, "Brunch: A Plea." The meal originated in England, and it spread throughout the United States by the 1920s from New York City, Chicago, and New Orleans. The history of brunch in the United States is a bit unclear. Some evidence suggests the American brunch was created in New Orleans, while others claim that during the gilded age, we saw brunch first take off in New York when city socialites such as Emily Post brunched at the infamous Delmonico's in Manhattan.

The spread of brunch has been shaped by social class, gender, and religious norms. Brunch began on Sundays and then became a ritual shared on both Saturdays and Sundays. Globalization and colonialism both contributed to brunch's spread across the world, especially into parts of Asia and the Middle East where brunch is often eaten on Sunday but also on Fridays in Islamic and Middle Eastern cultures.

Chapter 1, "The History of Brunch," traces brunch from England in 1895 to the 1980s in the United States. The chapter emphasizes how both religion and gender played an important role in the development of brunch as a social institution. Brunch may have begun as an after-church tradition for English Catholics or as a late Sunday breakfast for Saturday-night pub crawlers, but today it has become a contemporary symbol of culinary decadence and comfort food.

Chapter 2 examines brunch in the United States and the cultural significance of brunch globally. American brunch dishes such as eggs Benedict, omelets, fried chicken and waffles, as well as brunch drinks such as mimosas and the Bloody Mary are featured here. This chapter also explores brunch in Western Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. By looking at brunch across the world, we see how religion, culture, and immigration shape the diversity of brunch times and menus.

Chapters 3 and 4 divide the ritual of brunch between the family meal at home and the public ritual in restaurants. Brunch at home often conjures up images of Christmas or Easter brunch with the extended family, but it also has a history of secular holidays such as Mother's Day and Father's Day.

Chapter 5 explores the appearance of brunch in the arts and popular media. In a Portlandia episode of 2012, "Brunch Village," Peter and Nancy line up behind hundreds of others along several streets waiting to eat at the newest hipster brunch spot, "Fisherman's Porch." This sketch highlights and parodies what lengths American yuppies and hipsters will go to just to partake of the latest cultural trends, including eating at the newest hot brunch place. Brunch in popular culture exemplifies how the meal is shaped by gender, class, and shifting social

norms.

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# Chapter 1

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## Brunch History

Brunch is the combination of breakfast and lunch, but what makes brunch distinct from breakfast? Breakfast is the beginning of a workday, and brunch marks the weekend. Brunch can include both breakfast and lunch fare because at brunch there are no rules. Brunch lends itself to informality and leisure, culinary indulgences, and comfort food. Brunch is the guilt-free meal when you can have your cake and eat it too, or fried chicken and waffles or eggs Benedict and French toast!

Variations of brunch existed in many cultures for years before the term brunch was created. The Chinese have had dim sum (small dumplings) for centuries. The French have a tradition of le grand petit déjeuner. In Mexico, huevos rancheros was named after the rancher's breakfast. Even though the term brunch was British in origin, brunch became an American tradition as it gained popularity in both New Orleans and New York City. By the 1920s, brunching in upscale hotels had become a symbol of status, and by the 1950s, brunch began to become more of a symbol of comfort and convenience. In more recent decades, brunch has been reimagined as a meal of both comfort and casual entertaining and as an occasion for indulgent and decadent dining. When else do we have an occasion to eat fried chicken and waffles, or oysters and lobster Benedict? Whatever the occasion, from a casual brunch out to catch up with friends or a holiday brunch to connect with the family, brunch is a reason to relax, slow down, and enjoy sumptuous dishes.

### THE ORIGINS OF BRUNCH: ENGLAND, NEW ORLEANS, AND NEW YORK CITY

The Oxford English Dictionary and Punch magazine cite the origins of the word brunch from an 1895 article called "Brunch: A Plea" by Guy Beringer in the British magazine *Hunter's Weekly*. A Hunter's breakfast was common among the elite in English society and was a late breakfast, usually including a selection of heavy meats, which men enjoyed after a morning of hunting. Hunter's breakfasts

came to resemble closely what we think of today as brunch; the word brunch first came into use in the English language at around the same time. British journalist Guy Beringer . . . wrote persuasively that "[b]y eliminating the need to get up early on Sunday, brunch would make life brighter for Saturday-night carousers. It would promote human happiness in other ways as well. Brunch is cheerful, sociable and inciting. It is talk-compelling. It puts you in a good temper, it makes you satisfied with yourself and your fellow beings, it sweeps away the worries and cobwebs of the week."<sup>[1]</sup>

In England, such meals were an indication of affluence. As British families accumulated more wealth, their breakfasts became more extravagant and by the 1880s included savory puddings, pies, meats, sauces, and roasts. This

“conspicuous consumption” by the aristocrats further displayed the stratification of British society.<sup>[2]</sup>

The first print mention of brunch in the United States was just a year after the term was coined in England in a November 27, 1896, special column in the New Oxford “News and Notes for Women” titled “The Newest Thing in Lunches”:

The latest “fad” is to issue invitations for a meal called “brunch.” This means a repast at 11 o’clock a.m., which is supposed to be the mid-day time between breakfast and lunch. Fashion may be foolish, but it is quite safe to state that if the free lunch had not been knocked out by the Raines law such an epicurean idea would never have been thought of.<sup>[3]</sup>

Brunch did not become a luxurious, elegant meal until it arrived in the American South,<sup>[4]</sup> and its first foothold in the United States was in New Orleans in the late 1890s. Begue’s in New Orleans is understood to be the first place to serve brunch in the South, and many consider New Orleans to be the original brunch city.<sup>[5]</sup> Madame Begue was a German immigrant to New Orleans who catered to French merchants, and her “second breakfast” was influenced by both French and German traditions. Many brunch dishes, including Oysters Rockefeller and grillade and grits, and “even the ‘brunch time’ meal” itself are credited to Madame Begue.<sup>[6]</sup> Begue’s became a notable establishment in terms of New Orleans cuisine and for the development of brunch as an American institution. At Begue’s, the staff would serve up both Cajun and French favorites alongside mixed drinks and coffees. Pain perdu, meaning “lost bread” or French toast, was also popularized by Begue’s.<sup>[7]</sup>

Madame Begue may have been the first to serve the “second breakfast” in New Orleans, but in New Orleans brunch quickly took on a life of its own.<sup>[8]</sup> Brennan’s was also a key player in establishing brunch in New Orleans.<sup>[9]</sup> Classic Southern brunch fare at Brennan’s included eggs Benedict, eggs bourguignon, eggs Sardou, omelets with seafood and sweetbreads,<sup>[10]</sup> as well as absinthe Suisse, bananas Foster, and hot French bread.<sup>[11]</sup> Luxurious riverboats on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers also helped increase brunch’s popularity in New Orleans as elaborate brunches were often served on these boats to the elite passengers.

Notable brunch spots in New Orleans include Brennan’s and Café du Monde. “In New Orleans, the tradition caught on in the 1950s with Breakfast at Brennan’s where the meals are still lavish, but alas, there is no jazz. Since then Sunday brunch has become de rigueur at the city’s large hotels, its flagship restaurants and, increasingly, at more chef-driven eateries . . . from the family-friendly Dixieland jazz at Arnaud’s to the you-can-hear-the-tinkle-of-the-silverware setting of the Grill Room in the Windsor Court Hotel to the steeped-in-history brunch at Antoine’s.”<sup>[12]</sup> Antoine’s is one of the oldest and most famous restaurants in New Orleans. Eggs Sardou (a dish based on eggs, spinach, and artichoke) is credited to Antoine’s.<sup>[13]</sup>

Arnaud’s is a restaurant credited with inventing the 1950s brunch cocktail,

punch romaine.<sup>[14]</sup> White rum, Sauvignon Blanc, lime juice, and simple syrup, garnished with nutmeg, is the basis for this brunch drink. The restaurant was established in 1918 by Arnaud Cazenave.

Though the early origins of brunch in the United States can be traced to New Orleans, it is in New York City where brunch was popularized. The infamous Oscar of the Waldorf Astoria in New York City is credited with serving one of the first versions of eggs Benedict, now a brunch staple. New York City's fine restaurants and hotels began advertising lavish Sunday brunches where Manhattan's socialite and upper crust could mingle and dine, and between the 1920s and 1950s, brunch in New York was a meal for the elite. Who else had the time and money to spend on this decadent meal?

In New York City, Delmonico's seems to have been the first institution to serve the glamorous meal that began the tradition of the elite brunch with its menu of Omelet aux fines herbes, poached eggs with truffles, and beignets.<sup>[15]</sup> The restaurant established social codes of conduct, dress, and demeanor for its guests and the hosts could turn away patrons at their discretion. Elite upper-class women were the first to be liberated from strict, gendered social norms that often structured public life, and unaccompanied ladies had the privilege to dine at Delmonico's for Saturday and Sunday lunch or brunch. This elite class of women possessed the cultural capital not only to know where to dine but also how to dine in "proper society." Emily Post was observed dining at Delmonico's for a Saturday brunch of oysters, eggs with truffle, filet mignon, and English muffins with her female friends during this time.<sup>[16]</sup>

## EARLY BRUNCH AND THE HISTORY OF EGGS BENEDICT AND FRENCH TOAST

The histories of eggs Benedict and French toast are intertwined with the history of brunch. Eggs Benedict reflects the decadence of the Gilded Age in New York City while pain perdu reflects the French influence of brunch in New Orleans, but who created these brunch dishes?

There is some debate about whether eggs Benedict originated at the Waldorf Hotel or at Delmonico's.<sup>[17]</sup> According to a 1942 New Yorker article, the origin of eggs Benedict can be traced back to socialite Lemuel Benedict ordering a meal at the Waldorf:

Lemuel Benedict came into the dining room of the old Waldorf for a late breakfast. He had a hangover (the statute of limitations permits publication of this libel), but his brain was clicking away in high gear. He ordered some buttered toast, crisp bacon, two poached eggs, and a hooker of hollandaise sauce, and then and there proceeded to put together the dish that has ever since, borne his name. Oscar of the Waldorf got wind of this unorthodox delicacy, tested it, and put it on his breakfast and luncheon menus with certain modifications' Oscar's version of Eggs Benedict substituted ham for bacon—and a toasted English muffin for toasted bread.<sup>[18]</sup>

Others, including Julia Child, claim that eggs Benedict originated with Chef Charles Ranhofer at Delmonico's and not at the Waldorf. In 1978, Bon Appétit credited Mr. and Mrs. LeGrand Benedict as the creators of eggs Benedict at Delmonico's.<sup>[19]</sup> By the 1970s, eggs Benedict had been adapted into a fast food. In 1970, Jack in the Box began serving an eggs Benedict sandwich, and in 1971, the eggs Benedict sandwich was modified by McDonald's to become the Egg McMuffin.<sup>[20]</sup>



**Eggs Benedict**  
(© Getty Images)



**Chocolate chip orange brioche French toast**

(Photograph by Thomas Barwick. © Thomas M. Barwick Inc.)

The origin of French toast in the United States has a somewhat clearer history and can be traced back to Begue's in New Orleans as pain perdu. Pain perdu was brought to New Orleans by French immigrants and became what we know as French toast in the United States. Here we can see the influence of French cuisine on Louisiana cuisine. American versions of French toast generally involve a simple preparation of frying bread in an egg batter with some sugar and milk. Variations on this often include maple French toast, bourbon French toast, and French vanilla French toast. French toast is often served with maple syrup but can also be served with jam or sandwiched with cream cheese, brie, or other sweet condiments. French toast also has variations across other cultures. In the United States, we often think of it as a breakfast or brunch dish, but in France and India, there are variations of French toast that are more custard-like and are served for dessert.



# PROHIBITION AND THE BRUNCH COCKTAIL

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Brunch history is also intertwined with the history of cocktails. The temperance movement, which can be traced to the early Women's Christian Temperance Union, was organized by 1874. This movement was led primarily by white Protestant women who sought to outlaw alcohol consumption because it was seen as a moral threat to family values and corrupting American society.<sup>[21]</sup> In 1919, ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment prohibited the sale of alcohol and the National Prohibition Act of 1919 (more commonly known as the Volstead Act) was enforced for thirteen years from 1920 until 1933.<sup>[22]</sup>

Though prohibition affected many, the elite were largely unscathed because of private clubs, home bars, and underground methods of transporting and selling alcohol. The mixing of cocktails became common in private homes, private clubs, and elite establishments: "Throughout the 1920s cocktails grew in popularity. Federal dry laws affected the quality as well as the volume of licit and illicit distilled liquor. Mixing helped disguise the fact that the scotch one was drinking had been aged for hours instead of years. Unlike cocktail manuals written before World War I for professional bartenders, Prohibition-era manuals aimed at the enthusiastic novice within the home."<sup>[23]</sup>

Brunch, a meal that allowed these indulgences, quietly adopted mixed drinks and cocktails. Those who adhered to Prohibition laws may have opted for coffee or tea instead of a Bloody Mary or mimosa, but the alcohol was there for those who wanted it. Many of the earliest brunch cocktails were some combination of vodka or champagne and fruit juices. Citrus juices had already been popularized as a breakfast tradition, so juice-based cocktails were a natural outcome of the combination of Prohibition and brunching, especially with the popular idea that "the hair of the dog that bit you" was the best cure for a hangover.

Some credit the Bloody Mary, one of earliest hangover cures, to bartender Ferdinand "Pete" Petiot at Harry's Bar in Paris in 1921.<sup>[24]</sup> The origin of the name is a source of some controversy. Others claim that the Bloody Mary was named after Queen Mary I of England, known as Bloody Mary for burning hundreds of Protestants during her reign in the sixteenth century, while another theory is that it came from a waitress named Mary who worked at the Chicago bar, the Bucket of Blood,<sup>[25]</sup> and still others believe it was named for Petiot's girlfriend.<sup>[26]</sup>

The mimosa was invented in 1925 in Paris. It is very similar to the English drink the Buck's Fizz, which is also an orange juice and champagne cocktail, but the mimosa is made with equal parts champagne and orange juice while the Buck's Fizz consists of two parts juice and one part champagne. The Bellini was invented in the 1930s at Harry's Bar and got its name in 1948 after the colors used by the painter Giovanni Bellini. Bellinis are made from peach juice and Prosecco, and served in a chilled glass.<sup>[27]</sup> The Greyhound is a basic brunch drink of grapefruit juice, vodka, and ice.<sup>[28]</sup> This becomes a Salty Dog if you rub the rim of the glass with grapefruit and dip in salt. Other popular brunch cocktails include the Ramos Gin Fizz and brandy milk punch.

By the end of Prohibition, the upper class had incorporated daytime drinking into their lives, but the middle class wavered in terms of social norms associated with alcohol consumption. Middle-class women in particular were cautioned about daytime drinking and the effect it might have on their reputations. In a section on brunch, the 1937 cookbook *Corned Beef and Caviar for the Live Aloner* discouraged the service of alcohol so early in the day: “As for drinks (alcoholic)—unless you feel that your guests want or need them, we wouldn’t serve them so early in the day. In fact we wouldn’t anyways.”<sup>[29]</sup>

By the 1970s, drinking during the day had lost much of its stigma, even for women, and daytime drinking accompanied the spread of brunch. The brunch cocktail had become a permanent part of most brunch menus inside the home and in restaurants and hotels:

Though the term “brunch” was coined back in 1895, it fit the laid-back, hedonistic 1970s lifestyle perfectly. Drinks were an important part of the brunch meal, and though bloody marys and mimosas remained popular, new drinks were also invented such as the Elmer Fudpucker and Harvey Wallbanger. Supposedly, the Wallbanger was named after a surfer named Harvey who, after drinking too many Galliano and vodka concoctions, walked into a wall. Crepes, another popular ’70s dish, could be served at brunch or any other meal.<sup>[30]</sup>

## THE SPREAD OF BRUNCH IN THE UNITED STATES: THE 1920S AND 1930S

By the 1920s, brunch begins to appear in women’s advice columns and etiquette guides. In the 1920s, brunch was still a meal taken in restaurants and public places by the upper class and elite. Tearooms in particular catered to women and ladies who lunched and eventually brunched. In 1924, Ida C. Bailey Allen addressed brunch in one of her early cookbooks in *Mrs. Allen on Cooking, Menus, Service*. Allen refers to brunch as the company breakfast and French *dejeuner* as well. The French *dejeuner* was actually a lunch that may have been associated with the early origins of brunch, but the company breakfast or breakfast party was a term used for entertaining in the home. Allen gives two sample menus for brunch, including the winter breakfast, which consists of grapefruit, ham, potatoes, toast, waffles with syrup or jam, and coffee and tea, and the summer breakfast, which includes berries, cream, eggs, popovers or potato flour muffins, and coffee.<sup>[31]</sup>

In 1925, Scotson-Clark in *Half Hours in the Kitchenette: A Self Help for Small Families* explained the difference between breakfast and brunch. On a daily basis breakfast should be small, but since Sunday is a day of leisure it is an appropriate time for a larger breakfast or “brunch.” Sunday lends itself to bacon and other decadent brunch dishes such as finnan haddie (smoked fish), omelets, kidneys, and breakfast meats.<sup>[32]</sup> In 1927, Della Thompson Lutes’s column, “What the Gracious Host Says,” explained that, “Any meal that is served before one o’clock is

a breakfast. After that, it is called luncheon. There is a fashion now in some tearooms and coffee shops of calling the meal served from ten o'clock to noon, 'brunch' or 'brekko-lunch'—a combination of breakfast and lunch."<sup>[33]</sup>

During the 1930s there was a transition in brunching from a meal shared in public at hotels or restaurants by the elite of society to a meal that could also be prepared at home. This was especially true for "business girls" and "bachelors," largely because brunch had developed a reputation among the middle class as a meal of ease, convenience, and leisure that didn't require much display in terms of formal china or a dining room. Thus brunch began to be seen as a meal that reduced housework. By the 1930s, housekeepers tight on time, professional women, and artists of the leisure class were all brunching.

By 1932, we see brunch begin to appear in cookbooks. In the women's magazine the *Delineator*, Ann Batchelder suggests that this meal is served between ten in the morning and noon, and that it will allow for a leisurely Sunday but will also keep children and men from getting irritated from hunger. The exact time for brunch can vary, but it is always late morning or early afternoon, and is described as a leisurely meal.<sup>[34]</sup> Lutes also addresses brunch in *The Gracious Hostess: A Book of Etiquette* in one of the earliest mentions of the wedding breakfast as a type of brunch or breakfast party.<sup>[35]</sup> Lutes refers to brunch as a fashionable trend only for the upper class, but it had obviously begun to catch on in the United States by the 1930s.

In 1933, the *Washington Post* emphasized that brunch or breakfast parties could also be a meal for those women who were not confident in the kitchen, because brunch did not require the courage that other meals did in terms of preparation. Brunch is also a way for women to entertain either because they are "housekeepers" with limited time or because they are "businesswomen." As Ruth Chambers writes:

Businesswomen who usually have to eat the morning meal "on the run" on weekdays may enjoy making breakfast a pleasant, leisurely affair on Sundays and holidays and invite their friends to enjoy it with them. Or it just may be the right time for you to entertain some popular guest whose social calendar is crowded with such affairs as dinners, luncheons or afternoon teas. . . . Call them "brunch." . . . Professional people, writers and the people of the theater who are apt to have more leisure at the beginning of the day than the crowded afternoon and evening hours, favor these gay breakfast parties. They are of course somewhat more substantial than the usual light repasts of every day, and in fact, they are like an early luncheon. Someone has coined the term "brunch" to cover these breakfast lunch parties.<sup>[36]</sup>

By the mid-1930s, brunch begins to be seen as a way to spend holidays and celebrations such as Easter, Christmas, and Mother's Day. Dorothea Duncan, in a 1935 article in the *Washington Post*, suggests for Christmas day to "plan a late combination of breakfast and lunch and serve dinner closer to dusk!" Here, Duncan echoes the trend of housewives receiving domestic advice to start combining

breakfast and lunch on Sunday to save time in the kitchen, and maximize time with the family.<sup>[37]</sup>

In “How We Abolished Week-End Drudgery at Our Home,” an article from the Portsmouth Times in 1936, Dorothy Marsh writes about taking up brunch on Sundays to cut down on household chores. She explains how she started to serve brunch to save time on domestic chores:

Now when the family votes for a round or two of golf, a few hours in the garden, a long hike, or a swim on Saturday afternoon, I am not too busy with dinner preparations to join them. . . . As for Sunday, we all have a say as to when its two meals shall be served, and never once do we let these meals step out of bounds and dictate to us. We’re just as well fed and lots happier, I know. And Sunday in our house is now a day when each one of us has a chance to rest—yes, even I, the cook. . . . And I find it an easy way for a business woman to entertain without a lot of fuss—for much of the brunch can be prepared on Saturday, my day at home.<sup>[38]</sup>

We can see that brunch becomes seen as something that frees up time by combining breakfast and lunch. This makes more time for other activities and increases leisure time with the family. Brunch can be an easy meal to prepare, especially ahead of time, even for businesswomen, because much of Sunday’s brunch can also be prepared on Saturday.

In 1937, Martin Ellyn discussed the spread of brunch in the Washington Post: “A mid-morning meal is taking the place of the early breakfasts in many households on Sundays and holidays. This hearty ‘brunch’ as it is called, is filling and adequate unless there are young children in the family who need meals on schedule.”<sup>[39]</sup> Brunch at home included orange juice, bacon, doughnut rings, coffee, and milk. Though cocktails had become popular by the 1920s, daytime drinking was still not a common social norm.

The spread of brunch was not without some debate, however. In 1936, Emily Post’s syndicated newspaper column disparaged “brunch” in a column titled “Breakfast or Lunch.” She writes, “I don’t know why a meal before 1 o’clock is called breakfast and why at 1 o’clock it becomes a lunch, except that is the way it has always been. At all events, let me implore you not to call your breakfast, at no matter what hour, a ‘brunch.’”<sup>[40]</sup>

In 1939, the Washington Post featured another significant article on brunch, emphasizing brunch as a pre- or post-church meal. The time for Sunday brunch began to shift a bit by the late 1930s as the Sunday supper moved later. The article also declared that brunch was a perfect way to celebrate Easter, as Easter is a spring meal that should be prepared in the home either for before or after church services. Martin Ellyn expands on the popularity of Easter brunch:

This week brings us to one of the most pleasant ceremonials of the year—Easter. This is the time to glorify Easter in a leisurely fashion. Spring flowers, beautiful silver, lovely linens and other appropriate accessories make an ideal

setting for the meal. Easter breakfast is a tradition in Washington, and it is the custom for Washington hostesses to make this meal an occasion for entertaining either before or after church.<sup>[41]</sup>

By 1939, the New York Times declared, “Sunday is a two meal day,” a significant proclamation as it symbolized actual changes in meal patterns for at least the American middle class. While the American elite had been brunching since the early 1900s, brunch had now become known as a time saver and economical meal for the American middle class:

Sunday is a two-meal day with many heathens who concentrate on taking life easy. They sleep late, have a huge combination breakfast and luncheon, and forget the entire subject of food until they think of late supper. The old days when it was customary to get up early Sundays and have breakfast at the usual time, sit down to a huge dinner at noon, and then sleep it off until supper time no longer provide a universal pattern. Hence, the present-day phenomenon of the breakfast—luncheon or “brunch,” as it is affectionately called. The word “brunch” is a hybrid, which sticks in the purist’s throat. . . . It starts off properly with a breakfast touch—orange or grapefruit juice. Scrambled eggs come next, and with them the pièce de resistance—kidneys and sausages with Madeira sauce, or creamed finnan haddie or chipped beef in cream. This is the dish that distinguishes brunch from ordinary breakfast. Plenty of strong fresh coffee goes with it, and one finishes off with a brioche or croissant with perhaps sweet butter and jam or marmalade or honey.<sup>[42]</sup>

Brunch had become popular in private clubs and in the homes of the upper class before it became a meal in restaurants, which turned it into a social event. Young America’s Cookbook, published in 1938, called brunch a meal that lends itself to easy entertaining, as it combines cooking breakfast and lunch into one meal. And in particular, brunch is encouraged as a family meal: “Young people don’t very often have the opportunity to eat away from home at breakfast time, so why not introduce ‘brunch’ to your crowd, and watch how pleased everybody will be.”<sup>[43]</sup>

## COOKBOOKS AND HOME COOKING: THE RISE OF THE MIDDLE-CLASS BRUNCH IN THE 1940S

By the 1940s, brunch had become a meal that was both served in American homes on Sundays and eaten out on holidays and special occasions such as Mother’s Day, Easter, and Christmas. With the popularity of brunch increasing, we started to see an increase in the number of brunch recipes in cookbooks, since options for blending breakfast and lunch now were in demand and brunches came to be seen as a simple, affordable, and convenient way to entertain at home on the weekend. In addition, advice columns and etiquette books began embracing brunch because it combined two meals and created more time for leisure. Church attendance was

still emphasized as part of the brunch ritual, and Sunday morning “after church” was seen as the ideal time to serve brunch, according to Bell’s *In Successful Parties*.<sup>[44]</sup> We also continue to see mention of brunch spreading across the nation as a meal of leisure.

In 1941, in the *Boston Globe*, brunch is described as a leisurely weekly meal where we can “do something tricky with the eggs. The usual orange juice may be missing as such but be supplanted by enticing looking orange water lilies and the bread supply may turn out to be waffles instead of toast, luscious fresh, steaming hot coffee cake, or even English muffins with plenty of butter and marmalade.”<sup>[45]</sup>

Cookbooks dedicated to brunch begin to appear in the 1940s. They emphasized making dishes ahead of time, easy preparation, and combining lunch and breakfast. The *Breakfast and Brunch Cook Book*, published in 1942 by the Culinary Institute of America, is one of the first brunch cookbooks. The cookbook offers recipes, suggestions, and ideas for seasonal, regional, and holiday brunches. “Seasonal Brunches” explains that “brunches follow the breakfast pattern of fruit or fruit juices, eggs, cheese, fish or meat, potatoes, breads, quick breads, and beverages, but use them in luncheon form. . . . Brunch offers really substantial fare, when you have a thick slice of ham broiled crisp at the edges.”<sup>[46]</sup>

“Sectional Brunches” (regional brunches) included selections from Southern brunches such as fruited sausages with hominy, fried apples, American fried potatoes, and mint grapefruit. Midwest brunches included items such as applesauce torte, creamed dried beef, toast timbales, and cinnamon rolls, while Western brunches consisted of baked trout and a fruit plate. New Year’s Day, St. Valentine’s Day, Washington’s Birthday, St. Patrick’s Day, May Day, May Garden, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, and Armistice Day are all brunch-appropriate holidays according to *The Breakfast and Brunch Cook Book*.<sup>[47]</sup> Many of these holiday brunches that began in the 1940s are still popular today. Brunch cocktails were not included in this 1942 cookbook.

Good Housekeeping embraced brunch by the mid-1940s because of the meal’s flexibility, diversity, and creativity. In 1945, Katherine Fisher of Good Housekeeping wrote:

Sunday should be a day when you and your family can take it easy and make your meal schedule fit your mood. This is why brunch—part breakfast, part lunch—is a good Sunday meal. It can be hearty or light, and it can be served any time. It need not interfere with church or Sunday plans, or with your children’s three meals. It can be a sit-down meal or an informal buffet, to which you can welcome the casual guest. Plan an informal evening meal, too. It all helps to make Sunday a day of rest.<sup>[48]</sup>

Historically, breakfast was a meal that was shared with family or intimate friends, and dinner parties were more formal affairs. Brunch, however, was a new meal that allowed for informal entertaining with guests, and brunch parties or brunch buffets at home lent themselves to relaxed entertaining with acquaintances, work colleagues, or neighbors.

Soon after GoodHousekeeping's piece on brunch, Fannie Engles' Cookbook was published in 1946. This cookbook explains that brunch is "a combination of breakfast and lunch, served in the late morning or at noon, usually on Sundays or holidays. It is informal, therefore easy to serve. Serve buffet style or set places around the table on the porch or lawn, or before the open fire in cold weather."<sup>[49]</sup> Under "Appropriate Food," Engles explains that brunch should start with fruit then be followed by a main dish, "hot breads," and coffee. The brunch menus include boiled grapefruit, creamed chipped beef on toast, coffee crumb cake, and coffee, and a second menu included orange juice, French toast, grilled sausages, fruit biscuit rolls, and coffee. Engles made no mention of brunch cocktails in 1946.

## SHIFTING GENDER ROLES AND THE SUNDAY AMERICAN TRADITION: BRUNCH IN THE 1950S AND 1960S

By the 1950s, brunch had become a permanent fixture on the menus of most elite restaurants in New York. In 1941, we see brunch on the menu of the Fifth Avenue Hotel as the first advertised brunch menu. By 1950, Tavern on the Green had a Sunday brunch menu that was served from noon to 3 PM. Brunch had become a time-saving meal that was part of the Sunday tradition in America. Theresa Nefy's "We Switched to Sunday Brunch" appeared in 1957 in Parents' Magazine & Family Home Guide:

My husband and I were raised in the tradition of the Big Sunday Dinner. The table groaned with large roasts of beef, two or three kinds of vegetables, potatoes, rolls, preserves, cakes and pies. . . . Finally I decided there must be a better way to plan Sunday meals and activities. We wanted our family together on Sunday, to build the unity so necessary to happy family life. I wanted to skip the long preparation of vegetables. . . . The answer was a Sunday brunch. This is served at noon, when church is over but the afternoon hasn't actually started. The menu is simple, as an early meal should be, and makes good use of convenient frozen foods, mixes and bakery products. We always have fruit juice with mint or fruit or an ice added, then a hot dish followed by Danish or coffee cake, milk for the children, and lots of coffee for adults. The main dish may be a platter of bacon and eggs, or French toast with a choice of jam, jelly, marmalade or honey butter. Sometimes it's hotcakes (we start a little early and have two griddles). Or it may be a huge pile of sausages in biscuit jackets. . . . Yes, at our house the big Sunday dinner has given way to a hospitable brunch—and we love it!<sup>[50]</sup>

Similarly, in Time-Life's Picture Cook Book (1958), the author writes:

Today in many families, the big Sunday dinner has given way to brunch, a leisurely late morning meal that combines the best of both breakfast and lunch.

Weekday breakfasts are often eaten on the run, but many cooks find that, on Sunday, brunch followed by a light supper is more convenient than cooking three meals. It makes the afternoon much longer and becomes a pleasant time for the family to get together. Brunch parties are now an accepted way of entertaining. The menu is usually simpler than for a luncheon or dinner, and is easier on the hostess since most of the food can be cooked on short order or prepared ahead of time. Brunch is a flexible meal that adapts itself to almost any household. It can be quite formal, a buffet or guests can sit on cushions around the coffee table. It can be served indoors or out, with or without alcoholic drinks. . . . But there are no serious rules for brunch, and some people like to make it more lunch than breakfast with dishes like chicken casserole, veal or fish in sauce. It may be accompanied by a simple or even a fancy dessert, but this is optional; coffee is a must.<sup>[51]</sup>

Brunch had become a meal with no rules by the late 1950s. The brunch family meals emphasize diversity of menu choices and simplification of schedules. Cookbooks suggest brunch's popularity grew because it is one meal replacing two meals, but also it lent itself to a leisurely Sunday afternoon for more time to spend with friends or family. Brunch parties appear in the chapter "Bonus Meals from the Piggy Bank" in Ida Bailey Allen's *Solving the High Cost of Eating: A Cookbook to Live By* (1952). In 1955, the recipe for "brunch treat" shows up in the *Good Housekeeping Cookbook* as a smoked turkey sandwich with eggs, biscuits, and coffee. The authors also mention Sunday brunch: "If you've never considered this kind of entertaining, do. Sunday brunch is a happy solution for the bachelor, bachelor-girl, or business couple."<sup>[52]</sup> And the diversity of brunch dishes continued to increase in the 1950s, going beyond griddlecakes, egg-based dishes, and traditional dinner entrees. In 1955, *Good Housekeeping* magazine provided recipes for creamed shrimp on rice, deviled ham rolls, mushroom stroganoff, and pumpnickel bread, portraying brunch as a weekend highlight: "May mornings are so delightful that everyone is eager to get up, especially if a Saturday or Sunday brunch for the family or a few friends is in the offing."<sup>[53]</sup>

Also in the 1950s, as middle-class women aspired to both maintain a domestic life and enter the workforce, brunch was seen as a way to maintain domesticity, and mainstream ladies' magazines and cookbooks continued to take note of brunch as culinary trend. Carl Degler's research highlights why gender roles continued to be important in how and why meal patterns changed.<sup>[54]</sup> Women's roles in particular contributed to the popularity of brunch among middle-class families. Women entering the workforce after World War II was not the single most important factor leading to the popularity of brunch, but it did contribute to the need for women to find a time and place for leisure. This was the beginning of professional married women who lunched or brunched out. Today ladies who brunch may conjure up images of *Sex and the City* and *Gossip Girl*, but by the 1960s ladies who brunched were often the ladies who worked Monday through Friday. Sunday was the one time that they could find to get out of the house.

By the 1960s, brunch had fully entered the American home, and cookbooks



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