



The Automat: The History, Recipes, and Allure of Horn & Hardart's Masterpiece

Marianne Hardart, Lorraine Diehl

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On the 100th birthday of Horn & Hardart, a look back at one of America's most beloved institutions

A coin-operated glass-and-chrome wonder, Horn & Hardart's Automats revolutionized the way Americans ate when they opened up in Philadelphia and New York in the early twentieth century. In a country where the industrial revolution had just taken hold, eating at a restaurant with self-serving vending machines rather than waitresses and Art Deco architecture instead of stuffy dining rooms was an unforgettable experience. The Automat served freshly made food for the price of a few coins, and no one made a better cup of coffee. By the peak of its popularity—from the Great Depression to the post-war years—the Automat was more than an inexpensive place to buy a good meal; it was a culinary treasure, a technical marvel, and an emblem of the times.

The Automat will take readers back to the days of Charles Lindbergh and Babe Ruth, Walter Winchell and Jack Benny, the Brooklyn Dodgers and shows at Radio City. Through beautiful archival photography, candid interviews, delicious recipes, and wonderfully evocative memorabilia, Lorraine Diehl and Marianne Hardart bring to life a time when a handful of nickels and the twist of a wrist bought a good square meal—Macaroni and Cheese, Boston Baked Beans, Chicken Pot Pie, Rice Pudding, and all the other favorites whose recipes are in these pages.

The Automat was a true American treasure, and here is its tribute.

"I have always thought that the Automat in New York has the best scrambled eggs in the world." —Gregory Peck

"To have your own stack of nickels placed in your tiny hands; to be able to choose your own food, richly on display like museum pieces; to make quick and final decisions at the age of eight; this was a lesson in financial dealings that not even two years at the Wharton School could buy today." —Neil Simon

"Oh, be still my heart! I used to shine shoes when I was fourteen years old. And when I was a little ahead, I would stop at Horn & Hardart." —Tony Curtis

"I lived at the Automat. They had the greatest chocolate milk. When I moved to Philadelphia, I apportioned less than two dollars a day to eat on, and the Automat was the only place I could do it." —Dick Clark

"I went to the Automat all the time. I grew up going to the Automat. The food was delicious. And it was wonderful." —Woody Allen

"The first time I came to New York, I had a meal at the Automat. I had heard about the Automat, and I had to go see what it was all about." —Leonard Nimoy

"I had the same lunch every day: three vegetables, a roll, and cocoa. All for twenty-five cents." —Jerome

Robbins

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