

Summary

CONTROLLED ENTERTAINMENT

– The Finnish restaurant in the 20th century

Modern restaurant culture was born at the end of the 16th century in Paris, out of which it spread, during the 17th century, into other European countries. Emblematic of the modern restaurant culture are the following features: restaurants became vanguards in gastronomy, the custom of table d'hôte was given up, the upper class began to use restaurant services and the word 'restaurant' was taken into use. The growth of cities and the spread of the hotel industry seemed to go hand in hand.

Modern restaurant culture also began to develop in 19th century Finland. The focus of development moved from Turku to Helsinki when the latter became the capital of Finland. The actual period of development began, however, at the end of the 19th century. Simultaneously with the development of the industry, means to restrict and control the growth and spread of restaurants were introduced. Behind these restrictions was the temperance movement that was emerging powerfully in Finland, and which saw restaurants as places of excessive drinking and decadence. As an effect of the temperance movement, Finnish restaurant culture took a decisively different turn than elsewhere in Europe.

This thesis aims to discover the factors that formed the distinctive features of the Finnish restaurant in the 20th century. The general outline of developments in Finland is sought after by comparing its most notable turning points to those that took place elsewhere, in Germany in particular. Germanic Europe is chosen as an object of comparison because it too was an area open to foreign influence. On the other hand, there was no alcohol monopoly in Germany. By comparing, it is possible to discover the causes behind various developments. Which were caused by the country's alcohol policy and which by other factors such as national or international fashions typical of certain historical periods?

The special position of restaurants in Finland can be seen, for example, in the attitudes of Finnish people towards restaurants at different periods of time. People have wanted to go to restaurants, they have hated restaurants, they have been permitted or refused entry to restaurants. An interesting group in Finland was the group of condemners, who did not use restaurant services themselves but who wanted nevertheless to have a powerful say in decisions concerning restaurants.

The background for the study is the bloom of the European restaurant industry, that is, the period of the belle époque in 1871–1914. At approximately the same time in Finland the idealized image of the Finnish identity was created. Since the 1860's or earlier, the Fennomans had been emphasizing the values of

sobriety, Lutheran religiousness and popular education. By these alignments the Finnish national movement also separated itself, by and large, from the liberalism of the Swedish speaking Finns. The ideal Finn ought to be patriotic, moral and sober. A great part of the Fennomans' ideological inheritance was carried over to the 20th century and was intertwined in many ways with conceptions of the good state and citizen – but also of the good worker. A strong advocacy of temperance as a civic virtue could not but affect the restaurant culture and Finnish thinking about restaurants that were developing precisely at the same time.

Year 1991, a year of economic depression, is the end of the scope of this study. In 1991 a new statute regarding the hospitality industry was issued, that no longer provided a definition for the name 'restaurant'. The statute referred only to catering businesses, that could be named relatively freely named by their owners. Only a brief glance will be taken at developments in the 1990's.

According to the original research plan, alcohol and alcohol policy were supposed to fall outside the scope of the thesis. However, the attempt proved to be impossible, for the restaurant has usually been defined in Finland through alcohol. On the other hand, a strict alcohol policy and state supervision meant that a considerable amount of information regarding restaurants was documented in the 18th century. Many of the sources of this study were originally produced to serve the needs of the alcohol administration. Magazines and journals of the hotel and restaurant industry have also been important sources. Entrepreneurs in the restaurant industry began to publish their own magazine already in the 1920's, and the year 1933 saw the birth of a journal specifically for workers in the restaurant industry. The collections of the Hotel and Restaurant Museum also include useful material for this study, from collections of newspaper clippings to menus.

It is possible to distinguish a small-scale upswing in Finnish restaurant culture at the end of the 19th century. Progress took place mostly in Helsinki and other urban centres of Finland. Finnish restaurant life was very international, for a considerable number of restaurant and hotel owners at the end of the 19th century were of foreign origin. In Finland there was still a lack of both capital and possibilities for education in top-class hotels.

Restaurant life started rapidly to differentiate according to class. At the turn of the 19th century the town councils of Helsinki and Turku divided restaurants into three categories. The first class consisted of the biggest and best kept hotels that were patronized by the upper class. The third class consisted mostly of eating houses used by the working class. Restrictive measures were speedily taken to control especially the restaurants frequented by the lower classes.

The Finnish temperance movement continued to increase its numbers at the end of the 19th century. Adherence to the temperance movement continued to grow in spite of the fact that the consumption of alcohol was on the decrease at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. The explanation for the popularity of the movement does not lie, however, in the enormous drinking problem of the Finnish nation, which later studies have proved to have been mere propaganda of the temperance movement and the justification for its

operation. Only a small portion of the Finnish people had the right to vote at the end of the 19th century. At the same time, Finland struggled under the threat of Russification and periods of Russian oppression, due to which all political action was of a very restricted nature. Many associations offered an opportunity for people to gather and act in this difficult political situation. Irma Sulkunen has shown in her doctoral thesis that from the 1880's to the year 1906, the temperance movement functioned as an early form of the Finnish labour movement. The general strike of 1905 was the culmination of the temperance movement's activity. After that, membership in the movement declined rapidly, for some of its supporters moved into political parties. There were changes within the temperance movement as well, because of the victory of the supporters of the prohibition act.

At the same time, the educated classes began to form the ideal of a sober and industrious model citizen. This explains why it was desired that both the peasants and the urban workers were not to indulge in the corrupting night life of taverns or restaurants. Often the people themselves adopted this ideal image of the Finnish citizen. Many of the restrictions regarding restaurants concerned only the restaurants of the lower classes. As to the educated classes, they were regarded as capable of using alcohol in the correct fashion and therefore it was not deemed necessary to restrict their practices.

From the 1870's onwards, the hotel and restaurant industry was placed under heavy restrictions, according to the demands of the temperance movement. A statute that came to force in 1876 made it possible for a monopoly of the serving and retailing of spirits to be given to a company founded for that particular purpose and which did not need to aim for largest possible profits. After the implementation of the statute a local licensing company was established in every Finnish town except Kemi and Joensuu. Restaurants and wine sellers had to operate as renters and retailers for the company. Licensing companies might also operate as restaurant keepers. They operated mainly restaurants aimed for the working class, and in them there was an attempt to keep the consumption of alcohol as low as possible through interior furnishings that were basic or even uncomfortable.

Even though the Finnish hotel and restaurant industry developed mostly in towns, there was a statutory organization of inns operating in the countryside. In 1865 a statute was issued that allowed the serving of spirits only to travellers who were also eating customers. In 1892 the serving of spirits was completely prohibited in the countryside but in travellers' inns it was still allowed. In 1895 the selling of beer was prohibited in the countryside, but it could still be sold to non-locals, if the local municipality gave its consent.

The restrictions made at the end of the 19th century had lasting consequences for later restaurant culture. When the inn organization began to flourish again elsewhere in Europe at the end of the 19th century, in Finland it withered due to the licensing prohibitions. The typical village tavern that would have served as a gathering place for the local men, never existed in the Finnish countryside. The country inns in Finland never developed into places that would have for example cultivated the provincial kitchen.

For the country dwellers as well as for the urban labourers, going to the restaurant became a suspicious and inappropriate entertainment. The urban and upper class character of restaurants became even more accentuated in Finland. Urban, foreign and by a large part Swedish speaking restaurant life thus remained an unknown and terrifying cultural form for the Finnish speaking common people and this was clearly visible in the development of the industry almost throughout the 20th century.

The temperance ideology received such strong support in Finland that the first Finnish parliament accepted a prohibition act for the first time in 1907. The Russian czar did not, however, ratify the law. A partial prohibition act came into force during the First World War, when it was also in force in Russia. Restrictions regarding alcohol were partial because they did not apply to first class restaurants. The Finns were generally satisfied with the results of a partial prohibition of alcohol. A real prohibition act came into force in 1919, when Finland had become independent. Smuggling, bootlegging and the illicit serving of alcohol became very widespread. The prohibition act was considered a failure nearly from the beginning and in almost every stratum of the population. The prohibition act was reversed by a popular referendum in 1932.

After the prohibition act a new law concerning alcoholic beverages gave the trade, import and production monopoly of alcohol to Alko (The Finnish Alcohol Company). The monopoly also covered the establishment of licensed restaurants, prices, the issuing of licenses to private entrepreneurs, and rules regarding the serving of alcoholic beverages. Alko tried to imitate the times of the prohibition act as closely as possible so that the illicit trade of alcohol would not start again. In many respects the spirit of the late 1800's lived on in the new system. The countryside was kept as alcohol-free as possible by forbidding the establishment of a retail shop selling alcohol or a licensed restaurant there.

Alko gave licenses only to the restaurants it considered the best and for three years at a time. Restaurants were divided according to the same system as in the late 1800's: class I, II and III. Later on an international first class and a class IV were added. There were no bar counters or stools allowed at restaurants for fear of prostitution taking root. In 1935 parliament prohibited dancing at restaurants, for it was seen as encouraging prostitution and alcoholism. The restaurant-going of the lower classes was under particular control. There were various regulations concerning the alcohol consumption and eating at restaurants.

According to Alko, restaurants were not designed to be places for entertainment; their function was to serve food. Restaurants were regarded as civic schools that taught civilized table and social manners to the people.

The war years from 1939 to 1944 were an exceptional period in the history of restaurants. The industry was placed under more severe restrictions which now applied to all restaurants. Besides the rationing of alcohol, food service at restaurants was also rationed in the war years. The Ministry of Supply was in charge of the rationing of food. By the beginning of the 1950's, the rationing system that had been introduced because of the war began to be disassembled. The knowledge that the 1952 Olympic Games would be held in Helsinki speeded up the process. The state's alcohol policy was also moderated

somewhat because of the Olympic Games, for it was a modern Finland that they wanted the visitors and tourists to see. Bar stools and service from the bar counter were allowed in June 1952.

After the war, Finnish society had changed considerably. Wages rose and differences in wages began to even out, though there was a fall in the wages of the previously better-paid civil servants. In principle, a larger and larger portion of the population was thus able to use restaurant services. New customers began to come from all classes and Swedish began gradually to give way as the main language used in restaurants. After the war Alko commenced a period of strict licensing bureaucracy. The number of restaurants and customer seats at restaurants was the smallest in Alko's history from the beginning of the 1940's to the end of the 1950's. Restaurants were still considered to be civic schools for the Finns, who were in dire need of learning correct manners, especially in their use of alcohol.

By the beginning of the 1960's the situation in the restaurants was far removed from surrounding realities. The urban population had increased and society had changed. However, restaurants were still few and were used mainly by people of the higher social groups. A large part of the Finnish people were used to living without restaurants and were not likely to miss them. In the years from 1963 to 1969, no less than 70% of Finns went to a restaurant less than once a year.

The Finnish people began to desire a change in the restaurant scene in the 1960's. They wanted restaurants to have a more liberated atmosphere, the strict dress codes were discussed, as well as the subject of women as restaurant customers. In 1967 Alko sent a letter to the Finnish Hotel and Restaurant Association where it was stated that a woman coming to a restaurant without a male escort did not lower the standards of the establishment. The letter made, at least on the official level, women coming alone or in groups acceptable as customers.

Alko's attitude towards restaurants changed as well. In the opening of Alko's 1963 annual report the idea of restaurants as places of leisure where customers were allowed to enjoy themselves was introduced. The idea of the civic school had been relinquished.

Changes in society inescapably led to changes in alcohol legislation. A new alcohol law and law on medium strength beer came into force in 1969. The law included many important changes: it allowed, for example, the establishment of restaurants in the countryside. From the 1960's onwards, the number of restaurants increased considerably in Finland. In 1969 there were already more than 1000 restaurants in Finland and in 1977 there were more than 1500. There began to be more variety to restaurants and they could be accessed by all customer groups. The classification into class I, II and III restaurants that had evoked much criticism was gradually given up in the period from 1969 to 1975. When classification according to prices was given up, Alko began to classify restaurants according to business idea.

In the 1970's, Alko and restaurants already accepted all Finns as customers. New customer groups did not however rush into restaurants even though it had now become possible. A person's social group, living environment and attitudes

continued to define whether he or she used restaurant services or not. Restaurants were still considered to be places that were too fancy and slightly corrupt. Restaurants failed to make customers out of the older generations, who had an extremely negative image of restaurants. Who would go voluntarily to a place that evokes horror, fear and insecurity? What was most feared in restaurants was alcohol, and that one did not know how to behave in the correct manner.

The restaurant industry began to have more variety in the 1980's, and this process was speeded up by Alko's more liberal policy and the economic boom of the late 1980's. The biggest change was Alko's administrative council's decision on December 11, 1986, that no limitations were to be placed to the number of new licenses issued. As a result of this decision, the number of restaurants increased substantially. In 1986 there were 1751 licensed restaurants in Finland and in 1991, already 2739.

Going to, as well as dining in restaurants became fashionable in the late 1980's. The generations born in the 1950's and 1960's in particular turned into avid restaurant-goers, who at least did not seem to have any inhibitions in their use of restaurant services.

As restaurants proliferated, competition for customers became more severe. Customers now began truly to shape restaurants; restaurants no longer shaped the customers. The familiar rules and control dating back to the old restaurant scene were not very easily tolerated. The restaurant industry became yet more versatile and there were different types of restaurant designed for different customer groups. New restaurant types introduced were the gourmet restaurant, the pizzeria, the café and the pub. The Finnish language did not even have words for the new places, or the words were too old-fashioned to be suitable any more. Models for all of the new restaurant types were brought from elsewhere in Europe. Many restaurants imported their entire interior furnishings from abroad.

Even though restaurant customers of the 1980's felt themselves to be European and urban, the past of the Finnish restaurant was still reflected in customers' attitudes towards restaurants. The majority of the Finns lacked childhood restaurant memories or traditions. Because of this, the restaurant tradition was brought from abroad and was displayed in relaxed, kitschy interior decorating.

The bloom of the hospitality industry in the late 1980's ended at the beginning of the 1990's as Finland was hit by an exceptionally deep economic depression. For the first time in the 20th century, even a large number of personnel in the hotel and restaurant industry was left unemployed. On the other hand, old attitudes towards restaurants re-emerged in the 1990's. When the economy weakened, restaurant services were the first to suffer.

According to conceptions formed thus far, the Finnish restaurant industry was placed under severe restrictions because Finnish customers could not master their use of alcohol. However, conceptions of the dangers of alcohol to the Finns were born already before the restrictions. Thus the restrictions in the restaurants were based on a pure assumption that Finnish customers were

incapable of handling alcohol. It was the Finnish alcohol policy in particular that shaped the Finnish restaurant industry in the 1900's. New international and national fashions were quickly adopted in Finland too, providing they did not clash with the alcohol policy.

The history of the Finnish controlled restaurant that began in the late 1800's, comes to its official end in the year 1991. It was then that a statute on the hospitality industry came into force that ceased to define restaurants as places where alcoholic beverages are served. On the other hand, no new terms were introduced to the Finnish language to reflect the new versatile state of the restaurant industry.

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