

State-sponsored communal dining in Britain in the early twentieth century: The National Kitchen and the British Restaurant compared

Refeições comunitárias financiadas pelo Estado na Grã-Bretanha, no início do século XX: A Cozinha Nacional e o Restaurante Britânico comparados

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the British experience of state-supported commensality between 1900 and 1950, focusing on the major wartime initiatives: National Kitchens (1917-1919) and British Restaurants (1940-circa 1954). In both cases, British urban authorities could apply for central government funding to establish a social eating venue which would employ a paid staff to serve price-capped, nutritious meals to the public. These venues were required to break even. This marked an important departure in British social history and in the history of public feeding. This article compares these two episodes in mass dining on a national scale. It scrutinises the experiment in government-led public feeding against five questions. Does the British example constitute radical commensality? What was the role of women in these schemes? What were the nutritional considerations? Were they genuinely popular, and what was the impact on morale? Why did state-led communal dining in Britain decline?

KEYWORDS

Communal dining; Wartime feeding; National kitchen; British restaurant

RESUMO

Este artigo explora a experiência britânica de comensalidade apoiada pelo Estado entre 1900 e 1950, com foco nas principais iniciativas em tempos de guerra: as Cozinhas Nacionais (1917-1919) e os Restaurantes Britânicos (1940-cerca de 1954). Em ambos os casos, as autoridades municipais britânicas podiam candidatar-se a financiamento do governo central para estabelecer um espaço de refeição social, que empregaria pessoal remunerado para servir refeições nutritivas a preços controlados ao público. Estes espaços tinham de atingir o equilíbrio financeiro. Este facto representou uma mudança importante na história social britânica e na história da alimentação pública. O artigo compara estes dois exemplos de refeições em massa à escala nacional. Analisa a experiência de alimentação pública liderada pelo governo com base em cinco questões: O exemplo britânico constitui uma comensalidade radical? Qual foi o papel das mulheres nestes programas? Quais foram as considerações nutricionais? Foram verdadeiramente populares e qual foi o impacto no moral? Porque é que a restauração comunitária liderada pelo Estado declinou no Reino Unido?

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Refeição comunitária; Alimentação em tempo de guerra; Cozinha nacional; Restaurante britânico

RADICAL COMMENSALITY?

When the British state, in the middle of the First World War, decided to feed people en masse, there were two templates before it. The first, broadly speaking, was the Victorian feeding model: the soup kitchen based around the old voluntarist and commonly faith-based stereotype of the ‘Lady Bountiful’ doling out soup to the grateful and ‘deserving’ poor. The second was less top-down in its targeting of society’s poorest; it was also simultaneously more contemporary and more implicitly radical: it was, collectively, the many bottom-up instances of working class women coming together in big British cities from 1914 onwards to combat food supply disruption and price inflation through communal feeding.

One example of the latter model was the cost-price restaurant chain run by Sylvia Pankhurst’s East London Federation of Suffragettes (ELFS) in 1914. By 1915, cost-price restaurants were serving around 400 meals a day (Harrison, 2012, p. 248; Jackson & Taylor, 2014). Pankhurst spoke of “good families of people coming to my house without a penny and with six or seven children, and I opened two penny restaurants where you could get two penny meals” (Winslow, 1996, p. xix). For Pankhurst, however, such schemes were “all palliatives; it will not do any good really”, adding that she wanted “to change the system” (Winslow, 1996, p. xix). As a revolutionary socialist and feminist, Pankhurst viewed public feeding schemes, albeit ‘palliative’ as a radical act (Lavalette, 2017, pp. 369-382).

There were many other examples of public feeding where working class women were simply responding to local necessity rather than meeting any greater political objectives. And yet shades, albeit dim shades, of a radical ethos can be seen in the British state’s abandonment of voluntarism in food control (circa 1914-1916) and its embrace of a ‘food for all’ approach incorporating the national roll-out of public restaurants. This occurred between 1917 and 1919 under the ‘National Kitchens’ banner. National Kitchens were a network of state-funded dining rooms where people sat at benches and tables shared with others. These were aimed at the general public rather than at one particular social or class group, where price-capped and nutritious meals could be obtained.

In order to heighten the contrast with the soup kitchens of yore, these ‘kitchens’ were designed as sites of civilisation, incorporating music, artwork, tablecloths, and flowers. All this was revolutionary in as much as that, for many working class people, it was their very first taste of ‘eating out’: something generally associated with the upper classes up to this point¹. First sponsored by the state in May 1917, by mid-1918 there were over 1,000 national kitchens in Britain (Evans, 2022, pp. 21-69). Civil servants and food reformers embraced National Kitchens within a distinctly modernist idiom. “Probably at some future time it will be difficult to believe that each household in the country [cooked meals] which could have been prepared by half a dozen trained assistants” (Cox et al., 1918, p. 12), proclaimed the Ministry of Food’s *Public Kitchens* handbook of 1917.

There were limits, nonetheless, to the radicalism inherent in this fresh approach to public feeding. Charles Spencer, a Yorkshire tramway magnate appointed as the head of the Ministry of Food’s National Kitchens division complained to his boss, Minister for Food Lord Rhondda, that he did “not feel quite happy” with “the word *communal*” because “its association with Socialism is too well known, and I am afraid it is rather a handicap”². This patrician disdain for communalism explains the patriotic choice of title – ‘National Kitchens’ – and the removal of many of the radical and feminist voices which had pioneered the movement. Instead, the first state-funded National Kitchen on London’s Westminster Bridge was opened by Queen Mary on 21 May 1917, and thereafter the entire venture was wrapped up firmly within the Union flag.

¹ For a more in-depth history of this see Burnett (2004).

² Charles Spencer letter to Lord Rhondda, 16 January 1918. National Archives (TNA), Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) 60/310.

The brave new world of communal dining in Britain was, then, marked by conservative political anxieties from the very start. This dismissive attitude to the communal aspect of communal eating found echo a generation later when Prime Minister Winston Churchill rebranded the “communal dining centres” proposed by the Ministry of Food during the Second World War. Instead, these sites would be known as British Restaurants, Churchill insisting that the Ministry of Food’s title was suggestive of “communism and the workhouse” (Evans, 2022, p. 9).

Nevertheless, the expansion of the state during the Second World War ensured that a situation resembling war socialism emerged and nowhere was this more clearly demonstrated than in the state’s efforts to feed its populace, exemplified by the coupon-based ration card. The British Restaurants network which emerged in 1940 was more extensive than National Kitchens and more closely linked to other examples of Big State interventionism, like rationing, than in the First World War. Moreover, British Restaurants during the Second World War existed alongside a plethora of similar public feeding schemes. By 1941, the British Ministry of Food was managing a range of public feeding sites alongside British Restaurants such as Community Kitchens, Community Feeding Centres, Dock Canteens, ‘Cash and Carry’ Centres for agricultural labourers, as well as a number of similar ventures aimed at people displaced by bombing such as Emergency Food Kitchens, Evacuee Feeding Centres, Air Raid Canteens, Emergency Meals Centres, and Rest Centres³.

Like during the Great War, public feeding schemes in the Second World War were coloured by a patriotic royalism. Some venues even featured priceless artwork loaned from the Royal Collection at Buckingham Palace (Evans, 2022, p. 95). The increased professionalism and statism of wartime feeding in the Second World War also ensured that bottom-up feeding ventures were either nudged aside or incorporated into the state’s provision. Contrary to the popular assumption (influenced by the mass rollout of public diners in the USSR) that social eating is an essentially left-wing act, Conservative political voices were amongst those championing the British Restaurant and an individual like Lincolnshire grocer and town councillor Alfred Roberts, father of future Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (and held up by his daughter as the paragon of British private individualism) was in fact an enthusiastic supporter of the scheme.

There was an inherent radicalism in the scale of the operation of the British government to feed its people, nonetheless. To take British Restaurants in isolation, and discounting the many other feeding schemes listed above, they reached a peak of 2,160 in 1943. With nearly every town and city featuring a British Restaurant on its high street, and some boasting several, these public feeding spaces were ubiquitous and their ‘BR’ branding consistent and very visible. This is illustrated by comparison to the number of McDonald’s restaurants open in the United Kingdom currently, which is around half that figure (Evans, 2022, p. 116). The British Restaurant, like the ration book, became a fixture of the wartime experience, albeit one relegated to obscurity in the popular memory. Whereas the introduction of rationing late (1918) during the First World War would challenge the National Kitchen, the British Restaurant always functioned as a corollary to the rationing system during the Second World War and many consequently outlasted the war as austerity conditions persisted.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

As mentioned above, during the First World War working class women in Britain’s urban centres undertook the pioneer work in communal feeding to overcome price inflation and supply disruption. Many of these women found themselves sidelined when the juggernaut of state intervention produced the National Kitchen. Nonetheless, there were several middle and upper class women who enthusiastically championed the National Kitchen and became the ‘faces’ of the movement. Whereas the radicalism of the likes of Sylvia Pankhurst was unpalatable to senior civil servants at the Ministry of Food, patronage from other quarters was welcomed.

³ Wartime Meals Division monthly report to Cabinet, February 1941. TNA, MAF 156/282.

Influential and eccentric women in the British social eating movement of the First World War included the ‘Peripatetic Piewoman’ – Florence Horsburgh – who took dishes to the poor of Chelsea in a wagon pulled by a donkey and blowing on a tin trumpet. Horsburgh ran a National Kitchen in Chelsea and, made famous by the press as the ‘Peripatetic Piewoman’, was welcomed to Buckingham Palace by Queen Mary⁴. Although the leadership of the Ministry of Food remained resolutely male and patrician, several women were recruited by the Ministry to run a ‘women’s department’, which later became the National Kitchens advisory committee; these included the socialist Maude Pember Reeves whose 1913 *Round about a pound a week* is a classic survey of poverty in Lambeth, London. Female social reformers worked alongside nutritional reformers, like the Scottish war cookery guru Elizabeth Waldie, who found a new role as Supervisor for National Kitchens in Scotland (Evans, 2022, pp. 55-56).

Although the British movement towards state-sponsored public dining was supposed to mark an orientation away from the stereotypical upper class ‘Lady Bountiful’ of chilly Victorian philanthropy, these figures tended to recur in the story. Millionaire Russian-Jewish heiress Flora Solomon, who had played a role in bringing staff canteens to branches of retailer Marks and Spencer in the 1930s, was instrumental in the flourishing of British communal restaurants during the Second World War, as her self-serving yet colourful memoir recalls in detail (Solomon, 1984, pp. 52-89). Establishment figures such as the novelist Barbara Cartland were enthusiastic patrons of the scheme, to boot. In terms of central organisation, uniformity and ideology, however, the difference between the National Kitchen/British Restaurant and the soup kitchen could not have been more pronounced.

In both world wars, the bulk of the work in preparing meals on-site was undertaken by women, who were part of a paid service staff. In the Second World War, female volunteers were incorporated into British Restaurants on a greater scale than in the First, when voluntarism was somewhat frowned upon by head of the National Kitchens division Charles Spencer, who was keen that venues be run along strict business lines. Feeding in sites such as the London Underground and at the various emergency feeding shelters designed to cope with the aftermath of bombing raids was overwhelmingly female. During the latter war, moreover, convoys of food between sites were operated by the ‘Queen’s Messenger Service’, a branch of the Women’s Voluntary Service entitled to wear their own special badge.

While there was some concern at the Ministry of Food that British Restaurants did not appeal to working class housewives, who were used to preparing home-cooked meals, during the Second World War women also played a lead role in ensuring quality control and measuring the popularity of public canteens. Female Mass Observation diarists submitted reports on the operation of British Restaurants, which were generally positive, albeit the source material is inherently subjective. For example, the experience of communal dining could be, for the same woman, in December 1941 “not so bad”, with the diarist noting gushingly the “generous helpings” of soup, meat, vegetables and a dessert for just nine pence in total; in March 1942 “satisfying” with beef, potatoes, bread pudding, custard and coffee; or the next month, by complete contrast, gastrointestinal hell, with the “liberal use of sage and onion” in the mock goose resulting in “hours of pain and discomfort” (Chevalier, 2020, p. 116).

NUTRITION

In both world wars, the state’s sponsorship of communal dining partly rested upon the health benefits it was believed would be accrued through such schemes. Prior to the First World War, the discovery of vitamins in the 1910s provided linkages with deficiency diseases such as rickets, and dietetics would become a policy issue. Food reformers, including chefs and nutritionists, saw communal eating as a means to improve the health of the poor through better consumption patterns and nutritional education (Chevalier, 2020, p. 13). Great efforts were made to introduce the British public to vegetables and to incorporate vegetables in dishes offered in National Kitchens,

⁴ *The Daily Mirror*, 10 April 1918 and 2 November 1918. Horsburgh papers, Churchill College, Cambridge University, HSBR 2/1.

a priority which chimed with the wartime imperative of increasing the consumption of domestically grown produce. The *Public Kitchens Handbook* produced by the Ministry of Food during the First World War and written by food reformers warned against over-boiling vegetables which would result in “valuable salts” being “lost when poured down the sink or boiled” (Cox et al., 1918, p. 15). One of the co-authors of the *Handbook*, Eustace Miles, a celebrity vegetarian, was recruited in the crusade against the heavy, meaty diet of the Edwardian period.

Yet the lofty goals of food reformers and nutritional scientists for communal dining to improve the state of public nutrition clashed with more unhealthy popular tastes. Senior civil servants at the Ministry of Food realised that the footfall of people entering National Kitchens would be greatly reduced if the public perceived that they simply offered vegetable-based broths, something the *Public Kitchens Handbook* acknowledged, noting the public “suspicion” lingering from the Victorian era that soup kitchens only offered bland “bean-based dishes” (Cox et al., 1918, p. 18). Eustace Miles would have been acutely aware of this, having faced public ridicule throughout his career for his vegetarian lifestyle and food choices, variously construed as effete, elitist, or simply wrong-headed.

A balance, therefore, had to be struck. The compromise between healthy food and reassuringly familiar but less nutritious options was particularly marked during the Second World War, when the aftermath of aerial bombing saw traumatised people hankering for unhealthy yet reassuring ‘comfort food’ rather than the vegetable-heavy dishes recommended by scientists. Time and again, the experience of war showed that the “essential quality of portability”, as the Ministry of Food put it, trumped nutritional qualms when it came to public demand. In both world wars, leading figures at the British Ministry of Food stressed the civilisational and nutritional benefits of ‘sit down’ dining over healthy fare, but allowances had to be made for pre-prepared snacks – sausage rolls, sandwiches, Cornish pasties, cakes and buns – for consumption to the many people ‘on the go’. In rural areas, too, communal dining centres operated a “pie scheme” – providing portable and quickly consumed pies and pasties for rural labourers⁵.

It is difficult to assess the overall nutritional impact of the British experiment in mass commensality in the early twentieth century because the operation of rationing systems inevitably impacted upon public health alongside communal feeding. But while parsing apart the specific impact of the National Kitchen and British Restaurant on British public health is fraught with methodological difficulties, it is certain that both schemes were influential in shifting cultures of consumption.

During the Second World War in particular, more emphasis was given to the scientific advisory committee of the Ministry of Food in advising on what to feed people at communal dining sites. A meeting of food scientists convened by the Ministry during the middle of the war noted that the ignorance of the dietary role of vitamins had almost proved “disastrous” in the last war and planned to feed the nation a “basal” diet⁶, whereby individuals received “essential elements and minimum quantities” per food group, thus ensuring that everyone received basic nutritional requirements (Hammond, 1951, p. 94). The basal diet continued to influence scientific thought on public feeding, as evidenced by the influence of famed nutritionists like John Boyd Orr and Jack Drummond. This would ensure that thick vegetable-based soups and plates featuring one-third vegetables would become commonplace in British Restaurants, key battlegrounds in the nutritionists’ war on unhealthy stodgy fare. Innovation came in the form of new dishes such as “Scotch sprout” (a cooked Brussel sprout split at the stalk end, stuffed with sweet pickle and enveloped in mashed potato) and “Woolton sandwich” (named after the Minister for Food Lord Woolton and consisting of raw carrot, raw cabbage and raw celery with chutney or pickle)⁷.

⁵ Wiltshire County Council memo, undated. TNA, MAF 152/55.

⁶ Meeting of Scientists at Ministry of Food, 17 June 1942. TNA, MAF 83/382.

⁷ Ministry of Food, ‘Shelter Snacks and Sandwiches’ pamphlet. TNA, MAF 99/1598.

POPULARITY AND MORALE

In the final analysis, the two great exercises in British mass commensality in the early twentieth century were born of wartime conditions and their prime purpose – alongside social and nutritional improvement – was to achieve popularity and thus boost ‘Home Front’ morale. Alongside more humane objectives, the greater goal of victory necessitated the production of fit, well-fed and disciplined bodies and positive mental attitudes. Did the British government succeed in meeting this goal? The enjoyment of any dining experience is of course subjective, but this section seeks to answer this question by looking at their overall impact in terms of popularity and morale.

To a previous generation of historians, the answer to the question of how popular mass public dining was in Britain fluctuated between ‘not very’ and a flat ‘not at all’. To historian of the First World War Margaret Barnett, the National Kitchen never shook off the soup kitchen image. She claimed that they were “stolidly lower class institutions located in a dingy back street or public baths and presided over by the familiar Lady Bountiful” (Barnett, 1985, p. 151). When it came to popular appeal, Barnett held that public dining did not chime with the British public because “social levelling, communism and fair shares” (Barnett, 1985, p. 151), which they evoked, were inherently unappealing. Derek Oddy agreed on the unpopularity of social eating, citing the Food Controller of North West England on the British working man’s dining tastes: “the fried fish shop he knew, the cold supper bar where he could buy his tripe of ‘trotters’ he was acquainted with, but a restaurant was not in his line” (Oddy, 2003, p. 76).

Barnett’s verdict on National Kitchens formed a minor part of an overall survey of food in the First World War and a detailed analysis of the source material relating to National Kitchens does not sustain her conclusions. In fact, the Ministry of Food went to great lengths to ensure cross-class appeal and locations were more often high-street, to the chagrin of private retailers and restaurateurs, than ‘dingy back street’. National kitchens had, in fact, proved popular, especially among the lower middle-class and many – contrary to Barnett’s view – were pleasant and appealing venues at which to eat (Evans, 2017, pp. 115-129). Oddy’s negative verdict is more nuanced, pointing to the difference in reception of these venues based upon, first, geographical difference, and, second, that most pervasive measure of British social distinction: class. Like Barnett, Oddy’s exploration of the National Kitchen is a small part of an overall survey of food in twentieth century Britain. While a male working class disdain for the idea of ‘eating out’ at a ‘restaurant’ certainly existed, especially in urban working class areas of the north of England, the evidence does not support this cultural attitude as suggestive of wider trends and wider popularity. In the absence of a comprehensive rationing system until the later stage of the war, National Kitchens, where prices were controlled, were a popular means of avoiding food price inflation, especially for the squeezed middle class, which was a significant constituency given that many working class males dined at works canteens. Even allowing for the hyperbole of the wartime press, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the idea that public feeding was exclusively for the lower orders was successfully broken during the First World War (Evans, 2022, pp. 59-72).

When it comes to the Second World War, the question of popularity is somewhat easier to answer due to the existence of Mass Observation records. Historians are more positive when it comes to British Restaurants than their predecessors, but still sparing in their praise. Peter Atkins holds that British Restaurants remained ‘marginal’ to the story of wartime feeding, a judgement with which Natacha Chevalier tends to agree (Chevalier, 2020, p. 116). However, it is important to note that Atkins’ lukewarm verdict is based upon the strict definition of a ‘British Restaurant’, when in actuality the Ministry of Food ran a vast number of social eating sites under different names (see above).

During the Second World War, moreover, an increased footfall at social eating venues was accompanied by slick British propaganda across wireless, film and print. Commensality’s positive effect on morale and public popularity was amplified and, in many ways, perpetuated and assured by this coverage (Farmer, 2011). Celebrity endorsement from actors via wireless and film was integral to Home Front propaganda and the British Restaurant had its very own dedicated propaganda film: *Eating Out With Tommy Trinder* (1941) in which Cockney music hall star

Trinder treats his in-laws to a British Restaurant meal. Propaganda was critical in bridging the class distinctions that tainted the overriding message: egalitarianism in consumption, bolstering the public perception that not only were the rich undergoing austerity like them, but that everyone – regardless of class status – was eating the same.

Despite individual and subjective judgements on certain restaurants, the Mass Observation (anonymous diarists) verdict on the British Restaurant was, at their height, overwhelmingly positive: a Mass Observation survey of 1942 recorded that 96 per cent of people who had eaten in a British Restaurant regarded it as a positive experience; altogether, in 1941, the Wartime Meals Division estimated that some 325,000 members of the general public availed of some sort of public feeding on a daily basis⁸. In contrast to First World War, the stridently interventionist British state oversaw the ballooning of public feeding to meet an increased demand produced by aerial bombardment and the evidence, although mixed, points to a broad popularity.

DECLINE

If the British wartime experiment in commensality was more popular than previously acknowledged, it begs the following question: why did the National Kitchen and the British Restaurant failed to substantially outlast wartime/austerity conditions and become a permanent fixture of British life into the second half of the twentieth century and beyond?

The answer to this question is complex, but there is one feature in common in the decline of British social eating after both world wars. In both wars, the lofty goals of civilisational improvement did not resonate with the private food trade and the commercial food lobby. In both contexts, the popular post-war expectation of a return to ‘normality’ dovetailed with the desire for free trade and an end to market restrictions. Importantly, this popular yearning for a return to normality, after both wars, ultimately found common cause with the economic: the cost-cutting post-war objectives of British central government. Culturally speaking, in both contexts, everything ‘wartime’ rapidly came to be seen as socially passé once austerity conditions were eventually alleviated and a return to ‘fair play’ in the marketplace was anticipated, along with the return to private models of consumption over public ones.

In terms of the specific reasons for decline, the appeal of the National Kitchen of the First World War was dented by the introduction of a much more complete rationing system in the summer of 1918. Whereas communal dining worked in tandem with the much more sophisticated, early and comprehensive rationing system in the Second World War, the arrival of ‘fair shares’ on an individualised basis in 1918 dented to the communal ethos of the National Kitchen. Another key reason for the decline of the National Kitchen – and one lent emphasis by the Coronavirus crisis of 2020/21 – was the major public health crisis of ‘Spanish’ influenza, which necessarily removed the possibility of mass commensality.

The British Restaurant, by contrast, acted as a complement to the rationing system, a site, for example, where one could pay to get a meat-based dish ‘off-ration’ if one so desired. While the number of British Restaurants declined post-war, many lasted as long as austerity in Britain (1954). As above, however, cost-cutting priorities in Whitehall dovetailed with a broader post-war cultural weariness surrounding anything that smacked of wartime control. Arguably the most powerful symbol of how social eating came to hold uncomfortable cultural associations is the canteen scene in George Orwell’s bestselling *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) in which the immiserated plebs receive great dollops of purple-grey slop in state-run feeding centres. The association was unfortunate but

⁸ See the following Mass Observation Archive (hereafter MOA) diarists’ entries on British Restaurants (listed chronologically): MOA/D/5132, July 1941; MOA/D/5236, January 1942; MOA/D/5192, May, 1942; MOA/D/5410, September 1942; MOA/D/5446, January 1943; MOA/D/5176, April 1943.

pervasive. While some British Restaurants limped on into the 1970s, the dawn of Thatcherism (which, as detailed above, took liberties in its representation of Alf Roberts, a champion of British Restaurants, as the epitome of privatised individualism) signalled a political spirit entirely antithetical to state-supported communal consumption.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the British experience of state-supported mass commensality which took place, in two parts, in the early twentieth century. It has not discussed the voluntary public feeding schemes, most of them faith-based and run by groups like the Salvation Army, which persisted throughout this period because state-sponsored social eating in the shape of the National Kitchen and the British Restaurant marked a pronounced break with these trends in scale, uniformity, ambition, and social impact.

This article has argued for the broad popularity of the National Kitchen and the British Restaurant, arguing that previous verdicts have been overly negative and too narrowly focused. It has asserted the broad popularity and utility of early twentieth century British mass commensality, detailing their political, gender, and nutritional dimensions, arguing that their eventual demise was as much to do with absent political will as unpopularity.

Amid the rise of the food bank in Britain, whose numbers have now accelerated to a number broadly analogous to the number of British Restaurants at their peak⁹, Britain's history of early twentieth century commensality, in its ambition towards 'food for all', stands in contrast to the early twenty-first century institution of the food bank, a service arguably geared towards the 'deserving poor' and, indeed, to the pale imitation of state-sponsored commensality witnessed in Britain in 2021 with the government's 'Eat Out to Help Out' scheme. Although imperfect, since dismissed, and not universally popular, the ambition and scale of the National Kitchen and British Restaurant movement marks these schemes out as constituting an important chapter in the history of British public feeding, and one which, despite the condescension of posterity, was experienced, and enjoyed, by millions¹⁰.

⁹ Trussell Trust, End of Year Stats 2023, available at <https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/end-year-stats/#:~:text=There%20are%20more%20than%201%2C400,run%20from%20schools%20and%20hospitals.>

¹⁰ For an overview of British public feeding across the twentieth century see Durbach (2020).

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Submissão/submission: 02/10/2024

Aceitação/approval: 11/04/2025

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Evans, B. (2025). State-sponsored communal dining in Britain in the early twentieth century: the National Kitchen and the British Restaurant compared. *Cadernos do Arquivo Municipal*, (23), 1-9.
<https://doi.org/10.48751/CAM-2025-23408>

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