Gourmets Ride The Airways

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Gourmets Ride

Present-day air travel undergoes modernization in food service, according to Marjory Beneke

Intriguing menus and appetites stimulated from a ride through the clouds make mealtime on the skyways anxiously awaited by passengers. Good food is a complimentary service on airlines and is now more a matter of course than unusual.

Modern air travel offers a study in contrasts, especially with regard to food service. In 1927 only a portion of the 192 passengers flown by American Airlines were served meals in the air and a good sandwich was about the extent of that meal. Last year, the same company flew well over half a million passengers and served meals to 325,000 people.

Veteran sky travelers can remember when the copilot used to distribute a chocolate bar to his passengers if he could spare the time, letting the controls operate without manual assistance. Today approximately 50,000 spring fryers are purchased annually, each to be consumed somewhere above the clouds. Almost 30 tons of lamb chops, veal chops, steaks and cold cuts are used in one year. Thousands of loaves of bread, tons of vegetables and hundreds of thousands of rolls give some indication of how food service in the air has expanded.

As airline passengers eat the full course dinners planned by trained dietitians, they are covering many miles of territory below—moving anywhere from 180 to 200 miles an hour. Recently one stewardess figured that a plane travels about 100 miles while a passenger is devouring one tray of food. Juggling the figures and reducing them, the time for consuming a salad—in miles—would be 20, for a bowl of soup, 25 and for a dessert, 15 miles.

Many planes carry complete kitchens. However, one of the airlines prepares its food at 20 different stops located on the route from coast to coast. Meat and vegetables are kept hot and palatable through use of four large, wide-mouthed thermos jugs. One thermos jug might hold as many as 11 filet mignon steaks on a 21 passenger plane, and a second jug hold the remaining ten. On this size plane meals are served on trays, but a 14 passenger sleeper plane serves meals at tables. Cooking and dishwashing and other details are cared for on the ground.

"Snack Kits" carried by most airlines contain bouillon, cheese and crackers, hot chocolate, tea, cookies and other light refreshments. Both cold drinking water and hot water for tea are available. Coffee is carried on most flights during the winter months. Soft drinks are served in the summer.

Attractive and charming stewardesses probably add a bit of stimulation to healthy aerial appetites. Braniff Airways, Inc., of Dallas, employ hostesses from 21 to 26 years of age and who weigh between 100 and 118 pounds. Average height, between 5 feet 2 inches and 5 feet 4 inches, is desired. Employees are expected to be good conversationalists. The Braniff line requires that its stewardesses read regularly six specific magazines in addition to daily papers.

Breakfast on an airship might consist of fresh orange juice, scrambled eggs, link sausages, rolls, butter, jam or marmalade and coffee.

A typical airline luncheon is cream of tomato soup, relishes, chicken pot-pie, pear and cream cheese salad, chocolate pecan ice cream sundaes, rolls, butter, coffee or milk.

For dinner the menu might be chilled loganberry juice, filet mignon, relishes, buttered green peas, whipped potatoes, tomato and asparagus tip salad, French pastry, rolls, butter and coffee or milk.