



Feeling lazy?

I just love room service! True, it's quite expensive, but sometimes it's just worth the money. Who has not enjoyed listening to a good movie while eating a meal in their hotel bed? Raise your hand 😊. Today, we look at the origins of room service and how it has evolved over time.

Catering to the needs of the wealthy¹

In the mid-19th century, the Industrial Revolution created a new class of wealthy individuals who began to travel the world. This led to an increase in

¹ <https://www.justluxe.com/community/the-history-of-room-service-and-some-great-spots-to-find-it-a-1960131.php>

the number of luxury hotels that catered to their needs. In-room dining, also known as room service, was one of the services that high-end hotels and resorts started offering to their guests.

The Waldorf Astoria^{2,3,4,5,6}

The history of room service is closely connected to that of the Waldorf Astoria in New York. It goes back to the 1890s when John Jacob Astor and his cousin built competing hotels next to each other. Eventually, the cousins resolved their differences and joined forces before John died on the Titanic. Later, both hotels were dismantled, and their lands became home to the Empire State Building. The Waldorf Astoria was erected in 1931 on Park Avenue (its current location). President Hoover, broadcasting on the radio from the White House, said “*The opening of the new Waldorf Astoria is an event in the advancement of hotels, even in New York City.*”

With 47 floors and 2,200 rooms, The Waldorf Astoria achieved an impressive number of firsts: complete electrical wiring, reservations to eat at the restaurant, red velvet ropes to create order outside, male and female chefs, and a children's menu. But its most famous contribution to the hospitality industry was to be the first to offer room service (the hotel even built a special 18th-floor kitchen to minimize the time needed to deliver hot food to guests).

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Room_service

³ <https://www.cntraveler.com/stories/2016-02-25/things-you-should-never-order-from-room-service#:~:text=In%20part%2C%20that's%20thanks%20to,hot%20food%20to%20those%20rooms>

⁴ <https://deeplate.bauscherhepp.com/blog/historyofinroom#:~:text=In%2DRoom%20Dining%2C%20also%20know n,Astoria%20hotel%20in%20New%20York>

⁵ <https://www.thedailymeal.com/1125380/the-luxurious-origins-of-room-service-meals/>

⁶ https://www.justluxe.com/community/the-history-of-room-service-and-some-great-spots-to-find-it_a_1960131.php

Room service nowadays

While the Astoria's reputation for luxury remains, room service is no longer exclusive to five-star hotels.

- In 2016, 22% of US hotels offered in-room dining⁷.
- In 2019, 67% of travelers used traditional room service⁸.

Still, with the arrival of delivery apps and smart vending machines, room service may be short lived. Delivery apps provide cheaper, and sometimes better, food than hotel room service. This has led some hotels to form partnerships with them. For instance, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts partnered with DoorDash for free delivery on over 3,700 properties⁹. Also, Marriott Bonvoy members can earn bonus points on Uber Eats deliveries when they link the two accounts.

Room service alternatives are not limited to third-party delivery services. The vending machine industry is now capable of serving hot, fresh meals rather than just prepackaged snacks. For instance, some San Francisco Bay Area locations of Marriott Hotels host ramen vending machines from a company called Yo-Kai Express, which promises gourmet-quality soup in less than a minute. In Asia, the hotel industry has already adopted this practice by offering intelligent vending machines that serve a wide selection of hot meals at low prices.

Whether hotel guests choose in-room service or an alternative, one thing is sure: housekeepers are the ones that collect your food tray and clean your bed afterwards 😊.

⁷ <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/534829/10-secrets-hotel-room-service>

⁸ https://www.nerdwallet.com/article/travel/room-service-replacements-better-cheaper?utm_campaign=ct_prod&utm_source=syndication&utm_medium=wire&utm_term=anne-stanleymarketwatch-com&utm_content=1131419

⁹ <https://www.hotelieracademy.org/room-service-3-1-ways-to-boost-the-quality-of-your-hotels-sales/>

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Francis Léonard, CEO

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