

HALF A MILLION CHICAGO PEOPLE WILL EAT CHRISTMAS DINNER IN RESTAURANTS & HOTELS



HALF a million residents of Chicago will eat Christmas dinner in the hotels, restaurants, chop houses, hash houses, and barrel houses of the city.

More exactly to the point, 510,000 of the city's 660,000 dwellers in lodgings will pay an aggregate of \$246,900 for this Christmas dinner, an average of 45 cents for the Chicago Christmas dinner as served outside the roofs which shelter 1,300,000 dwellers in homes.

One hundred and fifty thousand of the 700,000 lodgers will have left the city for distant homes, or will have been invited by friends out of their loneliness to take dinner with these friends at home.

Two hundred men and women will sit down to dinners costing \$25 a plate.

Fifteen thousand others will pay 5 and 10 cents each for the meal, while 12,800 will go dinnerless or pick up the food as charity.

In the great hotels and restaurants where the epicure dines, if he must dine away from home, he will pay 25 per cent of his bill for food and 75 per cent for the wines and cigars and table decorations. In the army that must eat in the neighborhood restaurant, perhaps 15 per cent will be added to the cost of the average dinner. Only in the slums will the broken worldling take the set dinner of every day and eat only that he may be filled.

represents a loss for his house. This year the Christmas season is hitting every first class place harder than for years. Christmas day falls upon Tuesday. The impulse of every man, woman, and child is to get home for the day, if possible. Saturday is the first opportunity, and for thousands of the city's workers the Monday following will be a dead day in the business world. Thus, not until Wednesday following this first rush homeward will the hotel and restaurant proprietors begin anew to catch up with the unusual season's loss. Every traveling man who can get home is gone. Every city man who eats a hundred or two hundred dinners downtown in the course of the year also will be at home. Thousands from the "floating population" of the city will have gone if they have had the price of transportation.

Chicago has her own place in this eating of her Christmas dinners. Considering the census figures the city has an enormous population whose family life is confined to individual dwellings. Out of the 2,000,000 residents of Chicago, 1,269,000 people are living in their own homes in mansion, cottage, flat, or tenement. In the 3,150 family hotels and boarding houses are 31,500 boarders. In round figures this leaves 700,000 men and women in the class of "lodgers" who get their meals in the 1,500 restaurants and "quick lunch" places of the city, having no other place at which to eat.



Cost of Christmas Dinners

How the Christmas dinners of Chicago may be tabulated is suggested from the census figures and from the experiences of hotel and restaurant men in Chicago:

200 dinners at \$25	\$ 5,000
400 dinners averaging \$5.00 ..	2,000
1,600 dinners averaging \$2.50 ..	4,000
10,000 dinners averaging \$1.50 ..	15,000
25,000 dinners averaging \$1.00 ..	25,000
100,000 dinners averaging .75 ..	75,000
100,000 dinners averaging .50 ..	50,000
200,000 dinners averaging .30 ..	60,000
40,000 dinners averaging .20 ..	8,000
15,000 dinners averaging .15 ..	2,250
15,000 dinners averaging .05 ..	650
12,800 dinnerless.	
510,000	\$246,900



In the high priced hostleries of the downtown district it is noticeable that the frequenters of the places on Christmas day have a disposition to make the best of a bad situation by making the Christmas dinner something approaching extravagance. In the slum districts, however, the man who is down and out goes to the other extreme and shows a disposition to lay penance upon himself in his eating.

In the best restaurants it is marked that the Chicagoan who is without home dislikes to eat alone. He seeks for comradeship as on no other day in the year. Marking the city element eating in these hotels and restaurants, the table of four chairs is the average, though not infrequently there is call for the table with ten to thirty guests. In these larger gatherings some one who knows he would have to eat alone otherwise has set about collecting friends who are in his condition of homelessness, and at such tables, with enough wine served, something approaching the spirit of the season is attained.

Taking this average of four persons to a table, the dinner bill that reaches \$30 is remarked by the cashier. Yet occasionally when the host gets up to settle, the silver remains of a \$100 bill will go into a small purse. It is not that four persons can eat anything approaching \$100; few heads are steady enough even to drink to an extent approaching that figure. But when table decorations, cigars, and good will tips to the waiters have been covered the possibility of the \$100 dinner for four becomes easy of understanding.

Diners Pay Much for Wines.

Steward Roth of the Annex, asked to recall one of these dinners at \$25 a plate, was uncertain as to how any particular meal of the kind had been apportioned as between decorations, wines, and food. But in a general way he knew how he would have such a meal set in a way to preserve the unities represented in \$100 of cold cash.

"Taking the table as the first proposition," said he, "I should put \$15 into the flowers and evergreens for ornamentation. Flowers are high at this season and \$15 does not go far.

"Figuring on \$25 a plate as the total cost, I should put \$60 of the bill into wines. Champagne would be the chief beverage, and \$15 worth of it to the plate would not be out of proportion, especially considering the dreary spirit of a Christmas dinner downtown. This would leave \$6.50 to the plate for food.

"Invariably the man giving a Christmas dinner to his friends turns to the things that are expensive at all times, or to things that because of being far out of season are especially toothsome by contrast with midwinter outside. In these out of season dishes the products of the hothouse mount into money rapidly. Tomatoes that are in everybody's reach in August represent gold coin at Christmas. So do grapes from the hothouse and the whole list of fruits and vegetables.

Out of Season Dishes Favorites.

Some of the meat and fish dishes, too, cost beyond the ordinary understanding. For example, we import large quantities of fresh sole from Great Britain. When the carrying and packing and duty are paid on this luxury the first cost to a restaurant is large, and to this the chance of its spoiling before it is called for is a big item. Pheasants are imported, also, and

better grades find Christmas dinner dull. New Year's night makes up for it. It is the one night of the year when out of the feeling of celebration the chief and head waiter become central figures. That is one of the red letter nights to the downtown theaters, and it has been figured by downtown hotels that on ordinary winter nights one-half of the transient guests will go to theaters. On New Year's night all tickets to first class theaters command a big premium, and after the theater a supper follows the popular New Year's dinner downtown.

In that half submerged world where the cheapest restaurant and the crowded barrel house feed the hungry of Christmas day, thousands with the price of the fixed meal—largely of soups and bread—come and go in dogged silence.

Stew and Coffee for Christmas.

Fifty to 100 and more patrons are served in some of these 5 and 10 cent places. If quantity be the measure of some of these meals, they are surprising. Even if the guest should not care for soup the bowl of thick greasy matter will be set before him for refusal of fact. Five slices of bread on an average accompany the soup and do service for the meat that is to follow. Something in the semblance of butter may be served upon the edge of the plate holding the meat order.



the cost of this fowl is as in the case of the fish.

Four persons may not eat a \$100 dinner among them, but when the host on the occasion pays his bill he may rest assured that in these times of high prices for everything the lump sum is discounted in many ways before net profits are entered in the house ledger.

Among those who are regarded as epicures in downtown Chicago the Christmas dinner depletes their haunts to a discouraging degree. This fact has much to do with lowering the average of the Christmas dinner served in the 1,500 public eating places of the city. The man who can pay a big price for his dinner is the first man to get out of town or get home in the city for his dinner. One hundred and fifty thousand restaurant habitués of all kinds will have left Chicago or accepted invitations to eat dinner with friends in the city. The person who cannot afford to get away is the person who eats the cheap restaurant meals of the day, and while thousands of these will pay more for dinner than is usual the average of 45 cents a meal is small at a first glance. When 400,000 of these people eat a dinner under 75 cents, however, the figure is appreciated.

But if the downtown hotel and restaurant of the

This meat nearly always is a "stew," perhaps for the reason that almost any sort of vegetable in any condition may be mixed with it, while the stewpot, kept heated, will preserve the stuff to the limit of perishable matter. Yet pork and beef roasts are served, with all kinds of hash and with beans in various conditions of garbled pastyness. Coffee, lukewarm in thick cups without handles and taking on a mouse color in blending with the cream, completes the 5 and 10 cent meal.

Neatness, order, ventilation, and cleanliness of person of those attending counters belong to the unexpected things of the world if ever they are met in such places. There is a chance, even, that meeting with these virtues in such a place, they might not be understood.

Between these lowest feeding places where Christmas dinner is eaten only for its building up of wasted tissues and those places where champagnes are a requisite in tempting the pallid appetite to mince at the greatest of delicacies appealing to the imagination of the epicure—

There is play for the imagination of the citizen of the great middle class who knows as little of one as of the other condition.

