

The Social Significance of the Greasy Spoon Café

In recent years the traditional British Greasy Spoon Café has been in decline, this is in no small part due to the rise in the fast food culture with franchises such as McDonalds, Burger King and KFC.

We should begin by looking into the essence of a traditional Greasy Spoon. Traditionally, they serve a full English breakfast all day, have very strong builders tea available and generally not the best hygiene reports.

Perhaps it's this in part, which has led to the downfall of such institutions. However, it's also important to take into account the clientele of such 'Caff's'.

In days gone past, Greasy Spoons sat at the side of the major roads, providing a quick and cheap meal for all sorts of people. Lorry Drivers, Builders and Taxi Drivers. Since, then we've had the introduction of the Motorways and their service station, fast food became much more important, more people served in less time.

Greasy Spoons have been a staple of the British economy, feeding the true working class for many, many years, in fact 5 years ago, when we had an extension built, the builders would turn up at approximately 08:00 after having breakfast in the nearby café.

Having spoken to another builder recently he has stated that in today's world, builders will not make the effort to go out of their way to frequent a café. Instead visiting them once or twice a week as a team building measure. Early Monday morning, they eat, talk and generally learn about what they're doing this week. Then last thing on a Friday they'll once again eat, talk and evaluate. Indeed, it's usually healthier to bring sandwiches from home. In addition, it's usually cheaper. Although, a lot of meal choices depend on the weather; warmer days it's more likely to eat from a packed lunch. On colder days however you're really looking to be warmed up with a large mug of tea and a nice hot breakfast.

Without Greasy Spoon's we'd live in a very different country. What would Britain be without the traditional 'Caff'? Unfortunately, this isn't a question we'll need to ponder over for too long. According to an article by the BBC in 2002, more than one in nine traditional greasy spoons had closed since 1997. That number must have only increased in the last 8 years. There are multiple reasons why the greasy spoon has faded away.

The even greater emergence of fast food chains, or, more importantly, the introduction of coffee shops such as star bucks and their increasingly aggressive expansion. (Try it yourself: go to the [starbucks.com](https://www.starbucks.com) website and check how many locations are within 10 miles of your location). From my home, there are a grand total of 51 locations. Even more astounding is the amount of starbucks stores within ten miles of The UK Houses of Parliament. At present there is a grand total of two hundred and twenty two (222) starbucks stores within ten miles of the centre of British parliament. Then we have the other coffee shops of Café Nero,

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Costa Coffee and Tchibo, the sheer numbers of these are amongst everything else a leading cause of the dwindling numbers of greasy spoon Caff's.

Of course the modern healthy living society we live in frowns upon the greasy spoon. In fact there was a rumour that the European Commission had outlawed them however the report was actually just a concern of the health of long distance truck drivers.

Vans and other portable food outlets have replaced the greasy spoon in everyday life, with building sites being visited by catering vans. More importantly though, these vans are open most evenings to fill the stomachs of even the most drunken individual.

However, nowhere remains for the nursing of a hangover. In the olden days people would nip into a Caff, enjoy a massive full English breakfast and a mug of tea so strong that spoons dissolve within mere minutes, read the newspaper and properly wake up. The modern age is one where even breakfast is provided for in a fast food restaurant. McDonalds breakfasts are available from 5am at my local. The two greasy spoons I pass on my journey to work are both closed until 8am. Which of course is way too late for any of us who work at the major international airport, which just happens to be nearby. The greasy spoon seems to be best served by night shift workers on their way home.

Unfortunately in today's modern culture of health obsessed daily calorie intakes and Guideline daily allowances, it's all too easy to see that Greasy Spoon's originated at a time when wartime rationing had ended and people indulged in luxury at every possible opportunity. Now they are much less frequented and indeed the only time the majority of the British public sees inside one is on eastenders where any major public shaming is to happen during the two/three minutes where the Queen Vic pub is shut. Indeed, a friend of mine recently mused that he's only ever been into a greasy spoon once in his life and he hated it so much that he'll never go back.

It seems that the majority of the country agrees with him.