



**THE AUSTERITY
KITCHEN**
BY [CHRISTINE
BAUMGARTHUBER](#)

Where the alimentary is
elementary.



“In America the trains do not
whistle, but bellow like a young
calf” — “London to the Rocky
Mountains,” (1873)

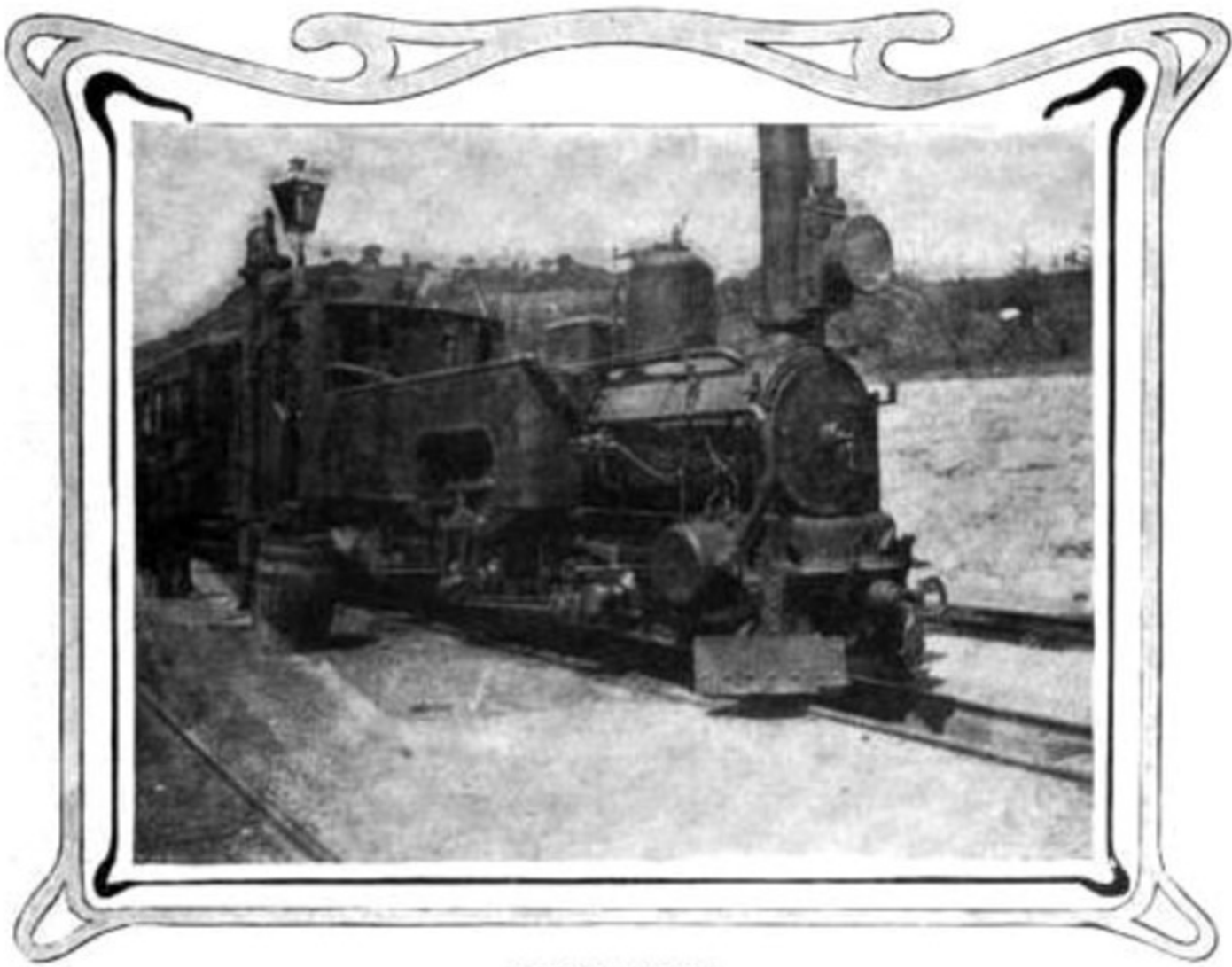
The Baltimore and Ohio
management has from time to time
been adding special features to its
dining car service,” a 1922 issue of
B and O Magazine reports. “The
new menu includes such summer-
time dishes as cold consomme,
salads, sandwiches, sliced
tomatoes, ham, [and] other meats.”

Previously by
[CHRISTINE BAUMGARTHUBER](#)

*Coweye Burgers and
Plastic Malts
Dinner with Caligula
A Contrary Image of
Steaming Excrement*

Rail Ambition

By [CHRISTINE BAUMGARTHUBER](#)



BOSNIA ENGINE.

At one time Bosnia boasted the best railway system in
Europe. Only the Orient Express offered better service.
Extensive in reach, its five hundred miles of narrow-gauge
line ran from Montenegro to Serbia. No fewer than eighty
tunnels burrowed through rugged mountains. And what the
railway could not burrow through, it ascended, its trains
pulled by herculean locomotives.

You would expect a ride on such a modern marvel to
command a steep fare. But passengers rode cheaply. The
government decreed that distance by kilometer would
determine the price of the ticket, upon which station agents
affixed stamps in two languages. Passengers tended to ride
second and third class — even the wealthy; the plush
appointments of first they believed to harbor germs.
Eminently legible signage announcing stations meant that
you could ride without care. And you could hop on and off
trains as you pleased; no stern conductor stood by to prevent
you.

The railroad’s popularity owed to the genius of its design.
Each year it conveyed over mountain and plain one million
persons and a million tons of freight.



SELLING WATER AT A STATION. BOSNIA.

The Bosnian railroad did lack such luxuries as express
service, dining cars, and even drinking water. But these
deficiencies presented little inconvenience. As to the
moseying pace, passengers came to relish it, preferring it to
rapid shuttling from burg to burg. As to the lack of
refreshments, passengers compensated for this by bringing
on board meals prepared elsewhere. Most brought their own
lunch, and when thirsty they either drank from bottles
brought from home or looked to the small boys parading
along every station platform hawking tumblers of water.

The bureaucracy responsible for this miracle of modern
transport called home a yellow brick and stone building
located in Sarajevo. There officials knitted their brows over
how to improve their cherished rail service. In their minds
public good trumped profit. Planning sessions could run for
hours. To gird themselves for these, railroad officials downed
coal-black Turkish coffee served by a stalwart man in a fez.
From caffeinated palpitations flowed the most innovative
engineering breakthroughs, and the people of the Balkans no
doubt appreciated the dedication of railway bureaucrats who
would forgo sleep to see their trains reach places no one
believed possible.



May 4, 2012

Pictures from *The Railroad
Trainman*, Volume 22 (1905)

Recipe for Turkish coffee from
Charles Martyn’s *How to Make
Money in a Country Hotel* (1901):
“[This] can be brewed from any
high grade coffee pulverized to the
consistency of flour. To so pulverize
it. procure a Turkish coffee mill
(costing about \$3.50). Then for
each cup of Turkish coffee take a
heaping teaspoonful of ground
coffee and a heaping teaspoonful of
pulverized sugar, place in a Turkish
coffee boiler (which is simply a
long-handled saucepan lined with
tin), with the necessary quantity of
cold water, and bring to a boil
(while stirring) three consecutive
times. Serve in small cups without
handles set in a holder of filigree
brasswork or hard metal
silverware. Small coffee spoons are
used.”