confined to fairs, amusement parks, and beach resorts for most of the first half of this century. A hint of their potential as mass-produced restaurant fare came with the founding of the White Castle hamburger chain in Kansas City in 1921. The chain spread slowly, taking almost a decade to reach New York. But White Castle was not a fast-food restaurant, nor were the times ripe for a fast-food restaurant. It was a cheap central-city eatery catering to local pedestrian traffic. Its hamburgers were made while customers sat at the counter and lingered over coffee, impeding the flow of new orders. The first real fast-food chains were spin-offs of the auto age. They catered to motorized families who preferred to take their meals inside chromium and glass, high-finned living rooms on wheels, rather than around the kitchen table. McDonald's, pioneered in 1955 by Ray Kroc, did not add stools and tables for sit-down customers until 1966. From then on the formula for success included take-out windows for autos, plenty of parking space, separate ordering and eating areas, limited menus, standardized portions, and a clean "family atmosphere." Today franchise holders own and operate most of the branch restaurants. In return for the name and national advertising, they buy much of their food, equipment, and supplies from the parent company and must abide by uniform standards regulating preparation, serving, and maintenance. At a McDonald's the hamburgers themselves arrive from central distributors as frozen patties. Employees fry them, place them between buns along with relish or a slice of cheese, and pack them in styrofoam containers at a rate sufficient to keep a stock on hand so that every customer's order can be filled without delay. Theoretically, at Burger King, hamburgers must be served within ten minutes after they are cooked.

In the early 1980s, Americans were eating fifty pounds of ground beef per head, mostly in the form of hamburgers. Every second, the fast-food restaurants alone were selling an order of one or two patties on a bun to two-hundred customers to the tune of 6.7 billion per year worth $10 billion. Fourteen million Americans a day eat in McDonald's alone.

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In my opinion, the rise of the fast-food restaurant was an event that was at least as socially significant as putting a man on the moon. I have in mind Edward Bellamy's prediction in his influential utopian novel, *Looking Backward*, that one of the great achievements of socialism would be to put an end to the capitalist way of eating. Bellamy's hero falls asleep in 1887 and dreams that he does not waken until the year 2000. Among the wonders he encounters, none impresses him more than that Americans no longer separately shop for, prepare, or serve dinner. Instead they eat meals cooked at neighborhood kitchens by ordering from menus published in the newspaper and served at elegant clubs. McDonald's, Wendy's, or Burger King scarcely provide the haute cuisine and luxurious salons Bellamy envisioned, but they go farther toward fulfilling the dreams of affordable dining out than anything the world has ever seen before. Nurtured in the bosom of capitalism, McDonald's, Wendy's, and Burger King are nothing if not centralized, efficient, and communal—the food is cheap, nourishing, and instantly available in unlimited quantities; no one waits on anyone else or washes dishes since plates and utensils simply get thrown away; and the patrons themselves carry the food to the table and clean up when they are done. (Of course there remains lots of drudgery, pressure to speed up, and low wages, but who believes in utopia anyway?)

Beef consumption and the fast-food industry took off together, leaving pork on the launching pad. It was not until the 1980s that pork began to appear on fast-food menus and then only as a component in breakfast specials. (McDonald's gave its McRib, a pork sandwich that oozed barbecue sauce, a field trial involving thirty-five hundred restaurants, but quickly dropped it when customers complained it was too messy and didn't taste good.)

The obvious solution to the problem of finding a way for pork to participate in the fast-food restaurant boom was to sell hamburgers that were a mixture of pork and beef. After all, frankfurters are a mixed pork-and-beef product, and have long been one of the mainstays of the pork industry. But no fast-food company has ever tried to market such a product. All hamburgers