



A **Soda Fountain** is a device that dispenses [carbonated drinks](#). They can be found in [restaurants](#), [concession stands](#) and other locations such as [convenience stores](#). The device combines [syrup](#) (commonly dispensed from a [Bag-In-Box](#)), [carbon dioxide](#), and [water](#) to make [soft drinks](#).

By extension, the term also may refer to a small eating establishment, common in the late 19th and early 20th

centuries, often within a [pharmacy](#) or other business, serving soda beverages, [ice cream](#), and sometimes light meals.

The soda fountain was an attempt to replicate [mineral waters](#) that bubbled up from the Earth. Many civilizations believed that drinking and/or bathing in these mineral waters cured diseases, and large industries often sprang up around hot springs, such as [Bath](#) in England or the many [onsen](#) of Japan. Early scientists tried to create effervescent waters with curative powers, including [Robert Boyle](#), [Friedrich Hoffmann](#), [Jean Baptiste van Helmont](#), William Brownrigg, [Antoine Laurent Lavoisier](#), and David Macbride. In the early 1770s, Swedish chemist [Torbern Bergman](#) and English scientist [Joseph Priestley](#) invented equipment for saturating water with carbon dioxide. In 1774 John Mervin Nooth demonstrated an apparatus that improved upon Priestley's design. In 1807 Henry Thompson received the first British patent for a method of impregnating water with carbon dioxide. This was commonly called [soda water](#), although it contained no soda.^[1]

The soda fountain began in Europe, but achieved its greatest success in the US. [Benjamin Silliman](#), a Yale chemistry professor, was among the first to introduce

soda water to America. In 1806 Silliman purchased a Nooth apparatus and began selling mineral waters in New Haven, Connecticut. Sales were brisk, so he built a bigger apparatus, opened a pump room, and took in three partners. This partnership opened soda fountains in [New York City](#) and [Baltimore, Maryland](#). At roughly the same time, other businessmen opened fountains in NYC and [Philadelphia](#). Although Silliman's business eventually failed, he played an important role in popularizing soda water.^[2]

In 1832 [John Matthews](#) of NYC and John Lippincott of Philadelphia began manufacturing soda fountains. Both added innovations that improved soda-fountain equipment, and the industry expanded as retail outlets installed newer, better fountains. Other pioneering manufacturers were Alvin Puffer, Andrew Morse, Gustavus Dows, and James Tufts. In 1891 the four largest manufacturers—Tufts, Puffer, Lippincott, and Matthews—formed the American Soda Fountain Company, which was a trust designed to monopolize the industry. The four manufacturers continued to produce and market fountains under their company names. The trust controlled prices and forced some smaller manufacturers out of business.^[3]

Before mechanical refrigeration, soda fountains used ice to cool drinks and ice cream. Ice harvesters cut ice from frozen lakes and ponds in the winter and stored the blocks for use in the summer. In the early 20th century, new companies entered the soda fountain business, marketing "iceless" fountains that used [brine](#).

The L.A. Becker Company, the Liquid Carbonic Company, and the Bishop & Babcock Company dominated the iceless fountain business. In 1888 Jacob Baur of [Terre Haute, Indiana](#) founded the Liquid Carbonics Manufacturing Company in Chicago, becoming the Midwest's first manufacturer of liquefied carbon dioxide. In 1903 Liquid Carbonic

began market-testing its prototype iceless fountain in a Chicago confectionary. Louis A. Becker was a salesman who started his own manufacturing business in 1898, making the 20th-Century Sanitary Soda Fountain. In 1904 Becker's company produced its first iceless fountain. In 1908 William H. Wallace obtained a patent for an iceless fountain and installed his prototype in an Indianapolis drugstore. He sold his patent to Marietta Manufacturing Company, which was absorbed by Bishop & Babcock of Cleveland.

Liquid Carbonic spawned another leading soda fountain manufacturer, the Bastian-Blessing Company. Two Liquid Carbonic employees, Charles Bastian and Lewis Blessing, started their company in 1908. The newer manufacturers competed with the American Soda Fountain Company and took a large share of the market. The trust was broken up, and its member companies struggled to stay in business. During WWI, some manufacturers marketed "50% fountains," which used a combination of ice and mechanical refrigeration. In the early 1920s, many retail outlets purchased soda fountains using ammonia refrigeration.^[4]

In their heyday, soda fountains flourished in [pharmacies](#), [ice cream parlors](#), candy stores, [dime stores](#), [department stores](#), [milk bars](#) and [train stations](#). They served an important function as a public space where neighbors could socialize and exchange community news. In the early 20th century, many fountains expanded their menus and became lunch counters, serving light meals as well as ice cream sodas, [egg creams](#), [sundaes](#), and such. Soda fountains reached their height in the 1940s and 1950s.

In 1950 [Walgreens](#), one of the largest chains of American drug stores introduced full self service drug stores that began the decline of the soda fountain,^[5] as did the coming

of the Car Culture and the rise of [suburbia](#). Drive-in restaurants and roadside ice cream outlets, such as [Dairy Queen](#), competed for customers. North American retail stores switched to self-service [soda vending machines](#) selling pre-packaged soft drinks in cans, and the labor-intensive soda fountain didn't fit into the new sales scheme. Today only a sprinkling of vintage soda fountains survive.

In the [Eastern Bloc](#) countries self-service soda fountains, located in shopping centers, farmers markets, or simply on the sidewalk in busy areas, became popular by the mid-20th century.^[6] In the USSR, a glass of carbonated water would sell for 1 [kopeck](#), while for 3 kopecks one could buy a glass of fruit-flavored soda. Most of these vending machines have disappeared since 1990; a few remain, usually provided with an operator.

Soda Fountains, apparatus for generating and [dispensing](#) soda waters. They were developed following a demand created when a Philadelphia perfumer began to [serve](#) soda water with fruit juices soon after 1800. In 1834 in New York City, John Mathews started to manufacture machinery to make carbonated beverages.

Improvements soon appeared, and about 1858 the marble fountain was invented and patented in Massachusetts. An American soda fountain was exhibited in Paris in 1867, and a popular [concession](#) at the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia in 1876 marked it as a national institution. In 1970 more than half of the approximately fifty thousand drugstores in the United States had soda fountains. By the end of the century, carbonated drinks and their advertisements were so ubiquitous that the idea of making a special trip to the [drugstore](#) soda fountain had faded into [nostalgia](#). The fountains

themselves fetched high prices as collector's items.

Read more: <http://www.answers.com/topic/soda-fountain#ixzz1XheOVDOQ>