



In collaboration with



The historical roots of Il Mercato del Duomo

Eating places, like commercial premises in general, are always closely linked to the history of the society that generates them, they mirror people's habits but also economic and cultural pressures. Likewise, Autogrill's Duomo Store speaks to us of over a century of transformations affecting the city and its territory, architecture and eating habits. The roots of today's Duomo Store are to be found, in fact, in the height of the so-called second industrial revolution, when Europe's main cities began to see for the first time a consolidation of the interaction between trade and leisure that was to change our spending habits forever.

There were two main instruments at work in this change: covered shopping arcades and department stores. These new commercial places introduced significant novelties, first of which was the strong appeal of the architecture adopted. Beautiful and spectacular, built in a modern style privileging iron and glass, they became meeting places, places in which to be seen, a social terrain in which public opinion, customs, and new spending habits were formed and spread under the banner of a gradual democratization of luxury.

Covered shopping arcades spread from Paris to London and in 1878 to Milan with the building of the **Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II**, one of the biggest in the world, while the Bocconi brothers were opening the city's first department store, the future *Rinascente*. The second stage in this development came at the end of the '20s. While the city was seeing the opening of its first non-luxury department stores, such as UPIM (Unico Prezzo Italiano Milano) and Standard, Angelo Motta opened his first bar, in the **Galleria**, in 1928. This **bar Motta** was rapidly to become a focal point in town, a mirror of changing customs and of developments in the confectionary industry, with Motta and Alemagna competing for customers by opening luxurious points of sale in which the communication of corporate identity became an instrument of advertising.

With the advent of the "affluent society" supermarkets too began to appear. Once again, Milan was the pioneer in Italy with the setting up of Supermarkets Spa (the future Esselunga) in 1957. Eating habits were changing too, and people started eating out of home, in proportion to their incomes. In this context, the patisserie in Bar Motta became a sort of Sunday ritual in which families coming from mass in the cathedral would buy pastries to take home for lunch. The café then opened a restaurant upstairs – including the area now occupied by Terrazza Aperol – where the upper class Milan of the period would celebrate their weddings, baptisms and other occasions.

With the crisis in 1973 Motta's revenues plummeted and together with the other leading motorway f&b operators, Alemagna and Pavesi, the company was put under the control of IRI. This, on 28 February 1977, was the beginning of Autogrill, a subsidiary of IRI which in addition to motorway catering had taken over the high street operations of the former Motta and Alemagna. Under public sector control the Motta establishment in the Galleria saw a new season of change and, as the centre of Milan filled with rampant yuppies (young-urban-professionals), the upstairs restaurant became the Magic spaghetti-bar, an eating concept introducing Milan style evening drinks in an ambience of sumptuous buffet islands.

It was not until the '90s though – when Autogrill was privatized and taken over by the Benetton family – that the formulas created in the '20s received their first really radical renewal. In the two year period 1997-1999, the building was restored and the location given its current physiognomy, that of a **multi-concept space** in which a pizzeria, beer parlour, bookstore and kiddies area were added to the bar. Clearly evident here too was the influence of changes in society and the need to diversify the offering of products and services for an increasingly heterogeneous clientele in terms of habits and aspirations.



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Nearly 20 years on, Autogrill's Duomo Store is going through a new process of radical transformation and re-affirming through Mercato del Duomo its pre-eminent role as witness to and interpreter of cultural and social change in the country.

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