

## Café Tortoni

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Company logo

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The Cafe Tortoni epitomizes the "porteño café", but little is known about its origins. Just that a French immigrant named Touan decided to open it at the end of 1858, and that the name was taken from an establishment on Boulevard des Italiens, where the elites of Parisian culture used to meet up. By the end of the century, the bar was purchased by another Frenchman: Don Celestino Curutchet, who the poet Allende Iragorri describes as a typical wise, old Frenchman, small in stature but strong in spirit, with several days' stubble and lively eyes, who wore an Arab silk black cap, almost reminiscent of a comic book character, adding another intriguing quirk to the café's ambience. The place was frequented by a group of painters, writers, journalists and musicians who formed the Agrupación de Gente de Artes y Letras (Arts and Letters Association), led by Benito Quinquela Martín. In May 1926 they formed La Peña and asked Don Celestino Curutchet to let them use the basement cellar. The owner was happy to accept as, in his words, the artists did not spend much, but gave the café a bit of luster and fame. In this café time seems to have stood still like an old photograph, when people used to come here to play billiards, cards, or just to share a coffee with friends. With each day that passes, the place becomes an ever more indispensable part of the history of Buenos Aires.