

Italian BR Second Class Coach with Refreshment Compartment

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Background

The adoption by several European railways of the UIC-X passenger car design was a watershed event in the postwar recovery and ongoing modernization of Europe's railways. Between 1964 and the early Eighties, the Italian State Railways (FS) purchased hundreds of coaches, baggage cars, and postal wagons built to this design specification and though superseded by newer designs, many continue to soldier on today in mostly internal service.

One of the lesser known variants built for the FS was the second class coach with snack bar compartment. A total of 139 were purchased, 99 of which were the large kitchen version, in which one restroom and three compartments were replaced by a kitchen and serving counter; the remaining 40 had a small kitchen wherein only the restroom and one compartment were substituted. The principal spotting features, visible only from the compartment side, were the absence of the small window where the restroom would have been and the tan shades applied to the snack bar compartment window or windows. These coaches also had two generators, one mounted on each truck (rather than the standard single one), and additional battery boxes slung under the frame.

Viewed from the corridor side, these coaches were virtually indistinguishable from a standard second class car; however most were marked with a distinctive "Servizio Ristoro" logo on either side near the snack bar end. All carried the class marker "BR" (B=second class, R=refreshment compartment).

Step by Step

I used a Rivarossi second class UIC-X coach as the starting point for my conversion project. The biggest shortcoming of this 30-year-old model is its lack of flush fitting windows and for that reason some may prefer to start with the Fleischmann 12-compartment UIC-X coach. If you do, you will have to add rectangles of plastic to the roof to simulate the FS's distinctive water tank covers. If you stick with the Rivarossi model, be advised that due to their scarcity, the FS-painted cars command a hefty price on the second-hand market; better to start with a DB- or SNCF-painted coach, either of which can be found at a reasonable price.

1. Disassemble the coach, setting aside for now all but the body casting.
2. Remove the restroom window frame; I recommend you do this before stripping the paint as it makes it easier to see your progress and the paint helps protect the adjacent surface from accidental nicks and scrapes. Holding the body with the compartment side facing you, the area to be modified is to your left. Specifically, the small window just to the right of the left vestibule door will be filled in.

Using a hobby knife with a chisel blade, carefully run the blade around the window opening and remove the molded frame. Using progressively finer grits of modeler's sandpaper, wet sand the area around the window opening until the paint begins to feather away from the edge; this ensures that the area is perfectly flat and all remnants of the frame are gone.
3. Strip the factory paint from the shell using a plastic-compatible stripping solution.
4. Meanwhile, turn your attention to the roof/window casting. If you are making the small compartment coach, you will need to reposition one of the roof vents; move three for the large compartment version. Again, make sure that you have correctly oriented the work so that you don't modify the wrong end; the stock placement of the roof ventilators is off of center line towards the compartment side of the coach. This casting is keyed to fit the body and will not fit when swapped end for end.

With the chisel blade in the hobby knife, carefully shave the roof vent(s) from over the snack bar area (each) as a single piece. Capture and save the vent(s)! Dress the 'wounds' in the roof with sandpaper and body filler as necessary to restore a smooth surface.
5. Reattach the removed ventilator(s) along the roof centerline (the highest point of the roof arch) using liquid plastic cement; when set, touch up the joints if needed:
 - a. Small Kitchen: Install the ventilator at the same relative distance from the car end, centered above the compartment window.
 - b. Large Kitchen: Install the first and third ventilators centered over their respective compartment windows; install the second ventilator offset toward the nearer car end with one extremity aligned to the edge of the respective window opening (see the following diagram).
6. Returning to the body casting, blank out the ex-restroom window using your preferred method. But don't glue a sheet of plastic on the inside of the window opening unless you want to go to the trouble of modifying the window casting. Remember that no matter what technique you use, the opening should look like it never existed; this isn't a 'patch job!' My preferred technique I learned from a plastic modeler; it's quick, strong, and gives good results:
 - a. Cover the opening from the outside with a piece of clear tape and make sure that it is well adhered to the edges of the window opening.
 - b. Turn the body onto its side; support it on a couple of objects so that there is no danger of leaking glue attaching it to another surface or item.
 - c. Fill the window opening from the back side with household baking soda; carefully level the soda so that it is flush with the inside surface of the wall.
 - d. Fit a Teflon pipette to a bottle of thin Cyanoacrylate (CA) and carefully dribble a few drops of the adhesive on to the baking soda. Start at the edges and work toward the center until all of the baking soda is permeated with the CA.

- e. After the CA sets, check the level of the inside surface to ensure it won't interfere with the window casting; scrape and trim as needed using the chisel blade knife, files, and sandpaper.
- f. Insert the roof/window casting; double check first to ensure that the CA is totally dry!
- g. Carefully remove the clear tape from the outside of the body.
- h. Work the plug with various tools to make it disappear into the surrounding plastic.

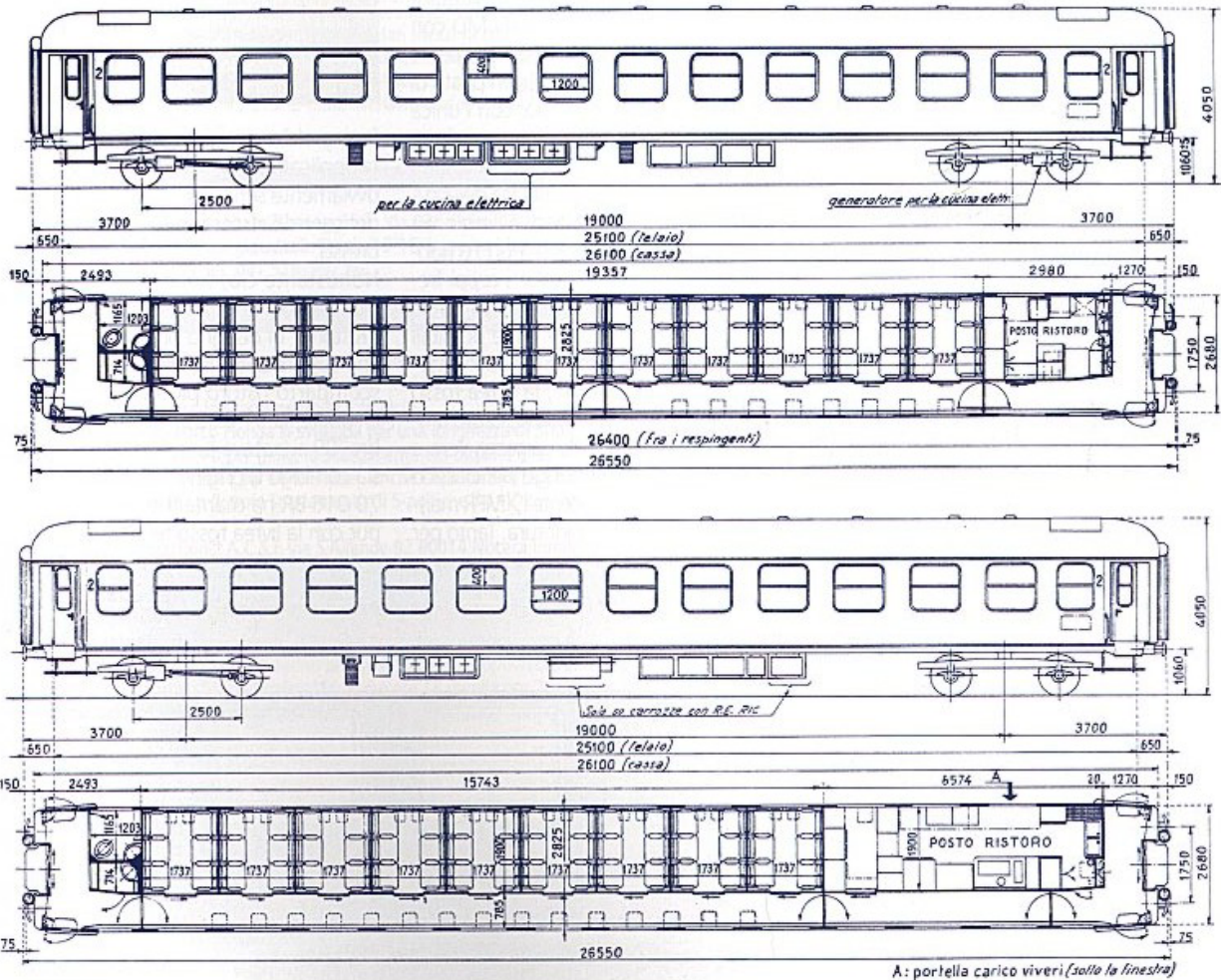


Figure 1 - BR Coaches – Corridor Side shown: Top - Small Kitchen; Bottom - Large Kitchen

Details, Paint, and Reassembly

1. Attach additional battery boxes.
2. Paint the interior of the body shell beige-tan.
3. Mask the window openings from the inside.
4. Paint the exterior of the body a medium-dark grey.
5. Mask the window band and repaint the roof silver.

6. Apply beige-tan paint to the inside of the window casting to simulate the shades pulled down on the snack compartment window(s). You may also paint shades on some of the other windows.
7. Paint the inside of the window casting at the one remaining restroom window ivory white.
8. Decals are on decalEnne set 160-11: <http://www.decalenne.com/>

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