

# Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson



Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson headquarters are located in Fullerton, California.

# Excellence in Products, A Leader in Service

From Hunt's Tomato Products and Wesson Oils to Orville Redenbacher's Gourmet Popping Corn, La Choy, Fisher Nut and Swiss Miss, any product from Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson not currently number one in the marketplace is likely the closest contender.

Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson is the top producer of tomatoes in the world, and one of the largest and most successful food producers in the nation. With a century-long reputation for strong leadership in the food industry, and continued innovations in products and customer services, Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson's prominence in the market is expected to continue for many years to come.

## A History Full of Successes

Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson today has hundreds of top brand-name products distributed all across the country and worldwide. The company's beginnings, however, were more modest, as a local fruit and vegetable processor in Santa Rosa, California. Incorporated in 1890 by brothers Joseph and William Hancock Hunt, the Hunt Brothers Fruit Packing Company quickly earned a reputation for excellence. After a few short years in the business, they relocated the plant in Hayward, California to accommodate the increasing demands for their product.

Meanwhile, further south in California, a young entrepreneur named Norton Simon was making a name for himself in the canning business. With the purchase in 1934 of a defunct orange juice canning operation in Fullerton, California, Simon began his long and distinguished career in the business world. He called his new business Val Vita Food Products and, within a decade, boosted annual sales from \$45,000 to \$9 million.

In 1943, Hunt Brothers Packing Company merged with Val Vita, and the new company located in Fullerton. The merger brought together Hunt's established reputation for time-honored quality and Val Vita's youthful, energetic and creative management team. The marriage retained the Hunt's quality name, and the company began promoting its new slogan, "Hunt—For the Best."

To supply its own needs, in 1948 the company built the first of its can-making plants and a glass plant in Hayward. These operations later expanded and eventually became United Can Company and Glass Containers Corporation.

Under Norton Simon's direction, the company soon became a nationwide marketing and distribution organization. Rather than compete with established food companies for existing markets, he insisted Hunt's create an entirely new market of its own with a few selected items, Hunt's Tomato Sauce chief among them. Advertising dollars were spent to educate the American cook on all the innovative ways to use Hunt's Tomato Sauce. The company went to great lengths — and still does — to develop recipes for the product. Cooks discovered — under Hunt's careful tutelage — that the sauce was a meat extender, hence a help on the food budget, and its tasty properties enhanced meat, fish and pasta dishes.

The company also launched one of the most extensive advertising campaigns ever attempted in the food indus-



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try. The Hunt's red label and recipes were seen in top magazines, billboards and millions of matchbooks.

Through a series of smart business moves, including mergers, acquisitions and marketing promotions, Norton Simon catapulted the company to a position of national leadership and sales surpassed the \$100 million mark.

The company, which had become Hunt Foods & Industries in 1956, reached a new milestone in its history in 1960 when the Wesson Oil & Snowdrift Company was merged with Hunt's, uniting two established leaders in the food industry.

In 1899, renowned American chemist, Dr. David Wesson, had introduced a refining process which revolutionized the cottonseed oil business. Called "deodorizing," the process eliminated the impurities that, because of its bad taste and odor, had made the oil unfit for human consumption. With his process, Wesson created a pure, delicate, natural-flavored oil perfect for cooking. Wesson Oil was the first vegetable oil sold at retail.

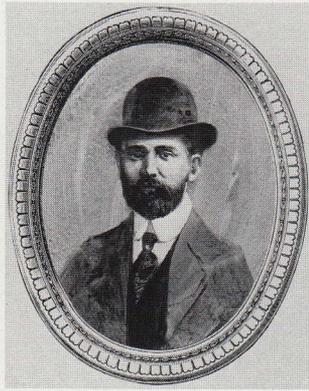
Wesson later developed the hydrogenation process used to produce the "hogless lard," Snowdrift Shortening. This laid the cornerstone of what was to become the highly-successful Wesson Oil & Snowdrift Company.

With the addition of the new oil market, sales for Hunt Foods & Industries, Inc. topped \$400 million in 1964.

In 1968 a consolidation of Hunt Foods & Industries, Inc., Canada Dry Corporation and McCall Corporation,



Will and Joseph Hunt



David Wesson

came together to form Norton Simon Inc., a new billion dollar corporation.

In the meantime, Hunt-Wesson continued to grow through marketing, expansion of its tomato and oil products, and a series of new products and acquisitions. Some of the most successful new products included Manwich Sandwich Sauce, Big John's Beans 'n Fixin's, Snack Pack and flavored tomato sauces.

Acquisitions also played a significant role in its continuing success. Perhaps the most notable was the purchase in 1976 of the Orville Redenbacher Gourmet Popping Corn operation. In a few short years creative marketing and sales had hoisted it to the most preferred popcorn in the nation. Sales had passed \$1 billion for Hunt-Wesson by 1979.

In July 1983, a whirlwind series of changes began when Norton Simon Inc. was purchased by Chicago-based Esmark, Inc., a holding company for such companies as International Playtex, Inc. and Swift and Company, among others. In turn, a year later Esmark was acquired by Beatrice Companies, Inc., a holding company with hundreds of businesses worldwide that had begun more than 90 years ago in Beatrice, Nebraska as a small dairy company. Little over a year passed and Beatrice Companies, Inc. was taken private by the investment firm of Kohlberg, Kravis and Roberts, becoming BCI Holding Company. Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson today operates as a wholly-owned BCI subsidiary.

Between the name changes, product integrations, changes in chief executive officers, and changes in parent companies, Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson, Inc. was entitled to an identity crisis. Amazingly, though, the company emerged not only with its identity intact, but stronger than ever.

Today, in addition to Wesson oils, Hunt tomato products, and such specialty products as Manwich Sandwich Sauce and Snack Pack puddings, the company is made up of the following businesses:

- **Aliments** — Founded in 1958 by Vincent Harrison, the company was originally named V-H Quality Food, Inc. Its product line at that time consisted entirely of Oriental sauces. When Beatrice acquired the company in 1966, the name was changed to Aliments Beatrice Quebec, Inc. Aliments became a part of Hunt-Wesson Canada in 1984. In addition to the sauces, the company's 55 products include Oriental canned and frozen foods.
- **Cal Compack** — As an industrial ingredients company, Cal Compack sells to food processing manufac-

turers. Founded in 1945, its chief products include a variety of ground chili pepper products such as paprika, chili powder, chili pepper and red pepper. It was acquired by Beatrice in 1962 and became part of Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson in 1984.

- **Container Operations** — Founded as the Atlas Diesel Engine Company in 1916, what became the United Can operation in the fifties is a major supplier of the cans for Hunt's tomato-based products and supplies some needs of other Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson products. More recently, the Container Division began manufacturing plastic packaging.
- **Fisher Nut** — In 1920 in St. Paul, Minnesota, Sam Fisher developed his own commercial technique for roasting and salting peanuts in the shell, a process he had observed in France during World War I. The business grew to include a complete line of quality nut products sold nationwide. Fisher joined Beatrice in 1962, and became part of Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson in 1984.
- **Food Producers International (FPI)** — Herbert Joshua started FPI in Minnesota in 1945. Specializing in ice cream toppings and other fountain product specialty items, today FPI is an internationally-recognized foodservice supplier. FPI also pioneered the first dispensing system for a hot chocolate drink base, and remains the undisputed leader in this field. FPI was acquired by Beatrice in 1977 and became part of Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson in 1984.
- **Gebhardt Mexican Foods** — Willie Gebhardt founded the company near San Antonio, Texas in 1896, when he developed a method to dry and grind chili peppers into powder. Product lines now include tamales, refried beans, and the still famous Eagle Brand Chili Powder. Beatrice purchased the business in 1961, and it became part of Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson in 1984.
- **J. Hungerford Smith** — In 1880, a young druggist named J. Hungerford Smith developed several of his own formulas for the fountain syrups and toppings used in his small Ausable Forks, New York drug store. Located today in Humboldt, Tennessee, the company is a major foodservice supplier of toppings, syrups and other specialty items. JHS was a 1979 Hunt-Wesson acquisition.
- **La Choy** — Founded in 1920 by two friends from the University of Michigan in Detroit, La Choy offers a full line of American-style Chinese foods. Relocated to Archbold, Ohio during World War II, the company was purchased by Beatrice in 1943, its first non-dairy business. La Choy became part of Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson in 1984.
- **Orville Redenbacher's Gourmet Popping Corn** — After years of research and development, in 1952 Orville Redenbacher and his partner, Charlie Bowman, developed a superior strain of popping corn and set out to prove that people would pay more for a premium product. They marketed the product on a limited basis. In 1972, they signed a distribution agreement with Hunt-Wesson Foods to distribute it nationwide. Four years later, in 1976, they sold the business to Hunt-Wesson.
- **Peter Pan Peanut Butter** — Peter Pan was introduced in the 1920s as the first shelf-stabilized peanut butter on the grocery shelves. Originally under the



Latest in manufacturing technology assures top product quality.

E. K. Pond label of Swift and later Derby Foods, Chicago, Peter Pan was part of Esmark, Inc. It was integrated into the Hunt-Wesson business in 1983 when Esmark acquired Norton Simon, Inc.

- **Rosarita Mexican Foods** — Rosarita grew from a one-room operation started in 1946 by retired Air Force flyer R. C. Scarborough and several partners. Located in Mesa, Arizona, the company produces more than 30 separate Mexican food products in a modern, large-scale facility. In 1960, Beatrice acquired the company and it became part of Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson in 1984.
- **Swiss Miss** — The Sanna family founded the business in the 1940s. In 1946, they purchased a milk-drying



Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson conducts quality control checks at every step of processing.

plant in Menomonie, Wisconsin, for the manufacture of military rations of nonfat dried milk. The Sanalac brand of dried milk was introduced to the retail trade in the early fifties, and in the late fifties, Sanna introduced the first instant hot cocoa mix, using their own nonfat dried milk. They also manufacture Swiss Miss refrigerated puddings. In 1966, Beatrice bought Sanna, and in 1984, it became part of Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson.

Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson operations now extend nationwide and into Canada, with nearly 10,000 employees and hundreds of locations including manufacturing, distribution, grocery and foodservice sales offices.

The current Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson president is Albert J. Crosson. Crosson reports to Frederick B. Rentschler, a former Hunt-Wesson president, and now president and CEO of Beatrice Companies Inc.

Crosson has strong feelings about the company and loyalties dating back to the Norton Simon days — of which he was a part. He emphasizes the company's professional management, competent employees, and ability to respond positively to the ever-changing business climate. "The performance of our people, reflected in the success of our company, has earned the respect of the business community and the trust and loyalty of our consumers," Crosson stated.

Of Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson's future, he sketches the goals: "The chief emphasis is to maintain the health of the business, to build our capabilities, to become a stronger force in the marketplace, to increase the operating profits and provide a return on the investment for our owners."

This will be done by continuing to be on top of the trends in the marketplace, by introducing new products and new packaging, by responding to the needs of consumers and customers, and by having the best people for the jobs.

Beatrice/Hunt-Wesson headquarters are located at 1645 West Valencia Drive, Fullerton, California 92633-3899; (714) 680-1000.