

Oscar Mayer Company History

1873 - Oscar Mayer Gets His Start



At the age of 14, and new to the United States, Oscar Mayer answered a "Help Wanted" poster for an apprentice (or "butcher boy") at George Weber's retail meat market in Detroit. Eager to learn the business, Oscar moved on to another job at Kohlhammer's market in Chicago, followed by a six-year stint with Armour & Co. in the Chicago stockyards.

1900 - The Mayer Brothers Take on Chicago



Ambitious and hardworking, young Oscar Mayer was eager to start his own business. Soon Oscar's brother Gottfried, a "wurstmacher" (or sausage-maker) from Nurnberg, Germany, would join Oscar in the states, and together they leased the Kolling Meat Market on Chicago's north side. Before long, customers in their German neighborhood were standing in line for Mayer specialties like bockwurst, liverwurst, and weisswurst. By the time a third brother, Max, joined them from Germany, the brothers had moved into their own establishment. Gottfried oversaw production, Max became company bookkeeper, and Oscar watched over the entire operation.

Demand for the Mayers' delicious sausages grew so much that by 1900, they were making deliveries by horse-drawn wagon to all of Chicago and its suburbs. In just a few years, the Mayers' business had become a thriving business!

1904 - The Mayers Pioneer Food Quality Assurance



As the fame of their products grew, the Mayers feared that other meat packers might try to capitalize on their success. Since most meat products were sold without a brand name, other meat packers could try to use the Mayers' reputation to sell their products.

In 1904, the Mayers became one of the first meat packers to brand their products. At first, they used the name "Edelweiss," for a white flower that grows in the mountains of Germany. They stamped it on rinds of bacon slabs, and printed it on boxes of pork sausage and on lard pails. Over time, they used other brand names like "Moose" (for baker's lard and heavier bacon), "Approved Brand," and "Meats of Good Taste." Finally, in 1929, the brand name of Oscar Mayer was first printed on **Oscar Mayer Weiner** packages and has been used ever since.

Besides having one of the first recognized meat brands, the Mayers were also among the first to have their products federally approved. In 1906, the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) was created to ensure the purity of food products, and the Mayers were among the first to volunteer for inspection.



1924 – Oscar Mayer Brings Home the Bacon



Step by step, the company was setting itself apart, not just by its rapid growth and reputation for taste and quality, but also by its innovative packaging. In 1924, Oscar Mayer introduced the first packaged, sliced bacon, for which it received a U.S. government patent. The idea for the new packaging came from Oscar Mayer's nephew, Carl Mayer, who realized that consumers could shop for cheese, lunch meats, and wieners in self-serve cases, but still had to ask their in-store butcher to slice and wrap bacon. The solution: Oscar Mayer's first self-serve bacon package featuring shingled slices wrapped in cellophane and placed in a cardboard frame. A huge convenience for consumers of the time, it took Oscar Mayer from a minor presence in the bacon business to a top brand.

Four years later, in 1928, the stage was set for further innovations when Oscar F. Mayer was elected Chairman of the Board of Directors and his son, Oscar G. Mayer, was named company president.

1929 – The Oscar Mayer Brand is Born



In 1929, Oscar Mayer & Co. instituted one of the most revolutionary changes in the meat packing industry. It began wrapping its wieners with a yellow paper band. Applied by hand, the bands were imprinted with the company name and the U.S. government inspection stamp. What's so revolutionary about a yellow-banded wiener? Lots. At a time when most wieners were sold in bulk, without any branding or packaging, the yellow band made **Oscar Mayer Wieners** instantly recognizable and assured consumers of taste and quality. Now when consumers shopped for wieners, one choice stood out among all the rest. Soon, **Oscar Mayer** would become one of America's leading brand names in packaged meat products.

1936 – The Wienermobile Makes it's Debut



In 1936, the first **Wienermobile** vehicle cruised the streets of Chicago. A giant replica of Oscar Mayer's popular sausage, it weighed about as much as 150,000 hot dogs.

Since its first voyage 70 years ago, the **Wienermobile** has been almost everywhere you can imagine, even appearing in two hit movies: "Ladybugs," starring Rodney Dangerfield and "Another You," starring Richard Pryor and Gene Wilder. It has also been a "guest" on late night television, appearing on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," and "The Late Show with David Letterman". Other television credits include: "Love Connection," "Yes Dear," and even CNN Headline News.

Today, the **Wienermobile** continues to bring smiles to **Oscar Mayer** fans everywhere, traveling about 1,000 miles per week or about 50,000 miles per year. Watch for it to visit a grocery store or event near you.



1952 – The Wienerwhistle: America's Must Have Novelty Toy



In 1952, Carl Mayer dreamed up the **Wienerwhistle** as a promotional giveaway. Shaped like an **Oscar Mayer Wiener**, it could be played like a real musical instrument. At first, **Wienerwhistles** were handed out by company spokespeople during **Wienermobile** appearances. In 1958, the whistles were packaged with **Oscar Mayer Wieners**, and in 1964, they were a sell-out success at the New York World's Fair, dispensed in vending machines for two cents.

Today you can get your very own **Wienerwhistle** wherever the **Wienermobile** goes. To keep up with demand, our vehicle can store up to 11,000 **Wienerwhistles**! So watch for the **Wienermobile** to visit your neighborhood soon.

1963- The Oscar Mayer Wiener Jingle Becomes a Hit



In 1963, "The Oscar Mayer Wiener Jingle©" made its radio debut. Written and composed by Richard Trentlage, it was chosen over 100 other submissions to be featured in Oscar Mayer advertising. The jingle was so catchy that consumers all across the country began to call in special requests to their local radio stations. It also became popular with marching bands and as a half-time feature during high school and college football games.

Today this "hit" song is one of the longest-running commercial jingles still in use. Join the fun and continue the tradition. Hear the jingle, read the lyrics and see the sheet music on oscardmayer.com.

1976 – The Bologna Song Joins the Oscar Mayer Hit Parade



In 1976, "The Bologna Song" commercial made its broadcast debut and soon, consumers all across the country could be heard singing along. Original plans for this now-famous commercial called for several children to sing the song, but one little actor was determined that he could sing it all on his own.

Today, many people still remember the first time they saw the commercial, and they still sing the song! And now, you can too. Hear the jingle, read the lyrics, and see the sheet music at oscardmayer.com.

1988 – Oscar Reinvents Lunchtime



In 1988, Oscar Mayer invented a convenient new way to treat kids to lunch with an innovative product called **Lunchables Lunch Combinations**. Based on the Japanese bento box, **Lunchables** products featured eight different combinations of meat, cheese and crackers, perfectly sized for small hands. Kids could use the ingredients to make their own mini sandwiches, and have lots of fun, too! Today, **Lunchables** items are still being developed with all the great taste and fun kids love, but many have seen reductions in either fat, sodium, or calories, so Moms can feel great about them too.



2003 – Oscar Mayer Introduces Deli Fresh Cold Cuts



In 2003, Oscar Mayer brought the deli experience home with **Oscar Mayer Deli Shaved Meats**. Packaged in re-sealable trays, they offered consumers all the texture and flavor of deli-style cold cuts without the wait. Today, **Oscar Mayer Deli Fresh Meats** are available in 3 thicknesses (shaved, sliced and thin-sliced) and 9 mouthwatering flavors including Mesquite Turkey Breast, Honey Ham, Roast Beef and Beef Salami! Look for them in your grocer's refrigerated meat case.

2006 – Sing the Jingle, Be A Star!



There's always something new and exciting at **Oscar Mayer**. And this year, we'd like you to become one of our Oscar Mayer all-stars!

"Sing The Jingle, Be a Star," by singing one of the Oscar Mayer jingles at a **Wienermobile** event, or by mailing in a videotape of yourself singing at home. If you qualify, you could become one of the finalists chosen by consumers all across America when they cast their votes online at SingTheJingle.com. Five lucky winners will be announced in December 2006 and each will have a chance to star in an **Oscar Mayer** commercial.

