

## The Story of General Foods

Food is America's biggest industry, with annual sales of \$76 billion, and General Foods is a major company in this field. It is a processor and marketer of quality packaged grocery products—one of the largest in the world. It is also one of the oldest American businesses, and at the same time one of the newest. The Walter Baker chocolate business predates the American Revolution, while an important and steadily growing share of GF's sales today stems from modern convenience products introduced since World War II.

The packaged grocery industry is a product of modern America. A few branded, packaged groceries were sold during the nineteenth century. For example, a young grocer in Springfield, Illinois, named Abraham Lincoln is known to have stocked Baker's Cocoa in the 1830's.

But it wasn't until the turn of the century that the packaged grocery business began to take hold, gradually bringing to an end the cracker barrel era when most food was offered to the consumer in bulk. During the first half of the twentieth century packaged groceries played an increasingly important role in bringing food from America's farms and other world resources to consumers' tables.

Through its well-known family of products, General Foods was a pioneer in this "revolution in the kitchen." Many of today's favor-

ite brands were familiar names long before 1925, the year that the Postum Cereal Company entered into the first of a series of consolidations resulting in the organization which in 1929 took the name of General Foods.

First to join the Postum organization in 1925 was the Jell-O Company which, like Postum, began operating in the 1890's. Then came Igleheart Brothers, millers of flour since 1856, Minute Tapioca (1894), Franklin Baker Coconut (1897), and Walter Baker Chocolate, which was founded in 1765 and is the oldest concern in the United States still making the same type of product at its original location. Later, Log Cabin Syrup, Maxwell House coffees, La France laundry products, Calumet Baking Powder, and Certo pectins joined the growing family.

In 1929 General Foods acquired the Birds Eye operation and began pioneering in the development of the quick-frozen foods industry. Other well-known products joined GF in recent years—Kernel-Fresh Nuts, Gaines Dog Foods, Kool-Aid, Good Seasons Salad Dressing Mixes, and S.O.S. Soap Pads. Each of these companies brought strength to the corporation through product diversification, and made possible greater operating efficiencies and economies which have meant better products and service to the consuming public.

General Foods is a growing company. In terms of sales and profits, growth has been steady over the

years and the company has never missed paying a quarterly dividend. Today it is the world's largest food processor. Net sales for the last fiscal year greatly exceeded one billion dollars, or more than eight times the 1940 rate of 143 million. And net earnings increased from \$15 million in 1940 to more than \$66 million in fiscal 1961.

Today General Foods produces and markets more than 250 packaged grocery items, under some 30 major brand names which it sells in the U. S. and 90 foreign countries. The company operates more than 100 plants and offices in the U. S. and abroad, including a modern research center at Tarrytown, New York, with a staff of several hundred food scientists and technicians. It is the nation's largest private food-research laboratory and is headquarters for the company's never-ending search for new and better products.

This year General Foods will complete its nationwide network of 16 new sales and distribution centers with the final unit in the chain at Dallas, Texas, to provide faster, more dependable service to its hundreds of thousands of customers. It enables them to reduce inventories, increase turnover, and thus obtain a greater return on their investment in General Foods products.

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