

# Charles Lubin



*W*hile Charles Lubin achieved considerable and rapid success after he went into the baking business in Chicago in 1935, nearly 20 years elapsed before he undertook the initiatives that catapulted him into baking history lore.

Joining his brother-in-law, Mr. Lubin entered baking by acquiring a

small chain of three neighborhood bakeries operating under the name of Community Bake Shops. The bakeries were popular, and the chain grew to seven stores before Mr. Lubin ventured off on his own in 1949. His first product, was a cream cheesecake. He branded the product using the name of his 8-year-old daughter and also named the company for her — Kitchens of Sara Lee.

Mr. Lubin continued to experiment with new products, and he introduced an all butter pound cake and an all butter pecan coffee cake in 1951.

While the company's products were selling well within a 300-mile radius of Chicago, a 1952 inquiry from a potential customer in Texas prompted Mr. Lubin to explore ways to think completely differently about Sara Lee's products and distribution. The Texan, a visitor to Chicago, had been impressed by the Sara Lee cakes, but Mr. Lubin knew that the quality would not be maintained if it were shipped long distances. He also worried that the products as he was making them would not freeze well.

Over the course of the next year, he reformulated the line in a way that allowed them to be frozen while still preserving quality and taste.

That same year he designed

foil-baking pans that would allow baking, freezing and distributing the products in the same pan. This

ful use of a new advertising medium — television — sales of Sara Lee products in the early 1960s quickly



*After Kitchens of Sara Lee was purchased by Consolidated Foods Corp, Mr. Lubin became chief executive officer of the acquiring business.*

innovation reduced costs in production and also allowed for competitive prices for customers. The result is hailed as causing a “revolution” in baking.

Over the next two years, Sara Lee sold its frozen cakes into all 48 states. The business was acquired by Consolidated Foods Corp. in 1956, and Mr. Lubin stayed with the business as chief executive officer. Two years later, the company moved operations from its bakery at Spaulding and Carpenter Street to a new automated plant on Elston Avenue in Chicago. The 140,000-square-foot plant was built at a cost of \$4 million.

Propelled in part by the success-

strained capacity of the Elston plant. In 1962, ground was broken in Deerfield, Ill., for a plant that was far larger. Indicative of the company’s explosive growth from the early 1950s was the groundbreaking ceremony attended by more than 1,000, including Illinois Governor Otto Kerner.

Coincident with the new plant construction, Sara Lee expanded the number of products it was placing into national distribution.

The Deerfield plant began operations in 1964, and incorporated a number of innovations, including the use of computers to help maximize operational efficiency and product consistency. The facility

was recognized in the trade press the following year as one of the top 10 new manufacturing plants in the United States. More than 1,500 new plants around the country had been nominated for the honor.

One of the most enduring legacies of Sara Lee came the same year Mr. Lubin retired, 1968. While pleased by the success the company had achieved with television advertising, the company engaged the well-known Broadway composer Mitch Lee (whose credits include *Man of La Mancha*) to create a new jingle.

The first campaign began with the line, “Everybody doesn’t like something, but nobody doesn’t like Sara Lee.” Ultimately, it has been the second half, double negative and all, that has endured as one of the most famous jingles ever.

Mr. Lubin retired from Consolidated Foods in 1968. The company was later renamed Sara Lee Corp. and today is one of the largest companies in the food industry, with annual sales of \$19 billion. The Sara Lee brand has proved a powerful one, even beyond the market for frozen foods. First introduced in October 2002, Sara Lee bread has become one of the top selling bread brands in the United States in a very short period of time.

At the time of Mr. Lubin’s death in 1988 at the age of 84, Sara Lee products were sold in more than 50 countries. His survivors include his daughter, Sara Lee Schupf, who was on hand at the 2006 ceremony inducting Mr. Lubin into the Baking Hall of Fame.