



Meet the Grower

Fontanini McCook, IL

Our Company, originally known as Capitol Wholesale Meats, was founded in 1960 by our father, Oriano Fontanini, a young Italian immigrant who believed in the “American Dream,” and his wife, Jennie. Originally, it was a meat company selling primal meat cuts of beef, pork, veal, fresh cut chickens, and making fresh ground hamburger.

Their children, Gene and Joanne Fontanini, worked in the family business at a young age. Gene learned the art of boning meat, and drove the original family truck making deliveries to our customers. Jennie from the start handled the financial demands of the business, mostly from her home office, and JoAnne quickly started to learn the basics of running a business.

In the 1970’s, the company occupied a 21,000 square foot building on Randolph Street in the “Old Italian Neighborhood.” At that time, Gene explored the pizza business and eventually brought the knowledge of making bulk and rope Italian Sausage as well as selling pizza supplies to pizzerias and restaurants back to the family. Through hard work and perseverance, Capitol Wholesale Meats, became a major pizzeria supply company in the Chicagoland area with more than 10 trucks delivering daily to pizzerias, Italian restaurants, and grocery stores in Illinois and Wisconsin. The Company name then evolved to Fontanini Italian Meats and Sausages.

Gene and Oriano then had the vision to focus on manufacturing and selling nationally and grew the business selling pizza distributors one state at a time. In the late 1980’s, The Swift Eckrich plant, a 3 story in the Chicago stockyards, became available for sale and we made the purchase of the century! It took a little over two years to renovate, and build a freezer. Up until this point, we manufactured raw bulk, rope and link sausages, as well as raw meatballs. Once settled in our new plant, we began producing Italian Roast Beef, cooked meatballs, and cooked Italian sausage for pizza. We then began to hire a direct Sales Team which drove sales both nationally and overseas. As business continued to grow, we made the decision in 2008 to build a new 188,000 square foot state-of-the-art plant located in McCook, Illinois.

The company still remains family owned and both Gene and JoAnne continue to run the day to day operations while grooming the 3rd generation. Today we are joined by our entire team of employees in our commitment to excellence.

We have built our history on a strong foundation brick by brick. Each of our walls is supported by a loyal following of customers that demand only the best. Every box we manufacture is marked with our name, Fontanini, and with our tag line traced back to our family roots from Lucca, Italy: Una Bella Differenza - A Beautiful Difference!



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