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MILO'S SWEET SUCCESS BEGINS IN ALABAMA

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MILO'S SWEET SUCCESS BEGINS IN ALABAMA

One of the country's most beloved beverage brands isn't just made in America—it's made in Alabama.

What started in 1946 as a walk-up hamburger shop in North Birmingham, opened by World War II veteran Milo Carlton and his wife, Bea, has grown into a household name.

Today, Milo's Tea Company is the No. 1 selling refrigerated tea in America and the fastest-growing top lemonade brand in the country. Its products are now sold in all 50 states and more than 55,000 retail locations.

And yet, its roots remain firmly planted in Alabama.

"My grandfather started our company in 1946 with a simple philosophy: use high-quality ingredients, listen to your customers, and never sacrifice taste," said Tricia Wallwork, Chair and CEO of Milo's Tea Company. "The values of hospitality and community have shaped how we brew our tea and how we run our business even today."

That philosophy first took hold in a small restaurant, where Bea Carlton sweetened the tea herself in the kitchen—a practical solution to post-war sugar rationing. The pre-sweetened tea became an instant hit and eventually the brand's sig-



TRICIA WALLWORK, GRANDDAUGHTER OF FOUNDERS MILO AND BEA CARLTON, CARRIES ON THE FAMILY LEGACY AS CHAIR AND CEO OF MILO'S TEA COMPANY.

nature product.

Now, Milo's brews billions of servings each year using the same three core ingredients: real tea leaves, filtered water, and pure cane sugar. No preservatives, no added acids, no dyes—just a clean, home-made taste that has struck a chord far beyond the South.

"We think it's our duty to bring more Southern gathering occasions to the rest of America," Wallwork said.

And the rest of America loves it.

In the last decade alone, the company has more than tripled in size, doubled revenue three and a half times, expanded from one production facility to four, and grown its team from fewer than 50 to more than 1,000 associates nationwide.

Alabama remains at the heart of the operation. The company's headquarters and flagship facility

in Bessemer and a second in Homewood are where much of its iconic tea and lemonade is brewed and bottled.

"Although we've expanded across the country, Alabama is still our home," Wallwork said.

Milo's first dedicated manufacturing facility opened in 2002 in Bessemer on the site of a former auto manufacturing plant. At the time, the facility spanned just 30,000 square feet on 3.5 acres.

Since then, the company has invested approximately \$65 million to expand the Bessemer campus to nearly 200,000 square feet across 50 acres.

In 2022, the company doubled down on its commitment to the state by converting a former dairy into a fully operational lemonade plant in just 15 weeks.



MILO'S WAS FOUNDED AS A RESTAURANT IN 1946 BY MILO AND BEA CARLTON AFTER MILO RETURNED FROM SERVING OUR COUNTRY IN WORLD WAR II.

MartinFed

"It's that kind of agility — that kind of drive from our remarkable associates — that is a great example of why we continue to call Alabama home and the reason we think doing business in Alabama is extra sweet," Wallwork says.

That facility began full operations in the summer of 2024 and has created more than 100 new jobs for Alabamians.

Milo's remains committed to creating highly skilled manufacturing jobs across the U.S. and most recently opened a \$200 million state-of-the-art manufacturing and distribution facility in Spartanburg, South Carolina, where it is adding 200 new associates.

That kind of growth shows up on store shelves, too, with new products.

This summer, the company added three new flavors to its lineup: Strawberry Lemonade, Raspberry

Lemonade, and Lemon Sweet Tea. "We're all about giving fans more to sip and smile about," Wallwork says. "These new flavored lemons-

dustry—but one thing that hasn't changed in more than 80 years is Milo's authenticity.

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-TRICIA WALLWORK, CHAIR AND CEO OF MILO'S TEA COMPANY

des and our Lemon Sweet Tea reflect our commitment to reaching more fans in more places without ever compromising the foundation of quality and homemade taste."

Wallwork has seen plenty of trends come and go in the beverage in-

"We're continuing to innovate with the same commitment to simple, real ingredients - a commitment we've been making for 80 years," Wallwork said. "We make tea just like my grandparents did."

But Milo's recipe for success is



STRAWBERRY AND RASPBERRY LEMONADE ARE THE NEWEST ADDITIONS TO MILO'S EXPANDING LEMONADE LINE, JUST IN TIME FOR SUMMER.

much more than tea or even lemonade.

"We put people first: our associates, our fans, and the people we serve," Wallwork says. "Whether that's paying 100% of our associates' family health insurance premiums or giving to non-profits through our 1% Profit Pledge, we are making investments that will last for generations to come."

It's a model that earned national recognition in 2024 when Newsweek named Milo's the No. 3 Most Loved Workplace in America.

That same people-first philosophy extends to the planet.

Milo's is a TRUE Platinum Zero Waste certified manufacturer, recycling or reusing 98% of its waste. The company composts more than 10,000 tons of used tea leaves annually for agricultural use in local communities and participates in a water stewardship initiative.

It's something Milo's calls "purposeful profit"—and in Alabama, we know exactly what that means: create something honest, be a good steward, and treat everyone like family.

As Americans enjoy a taste of Alabama, they know exactly where it came from when they see "Bessemer, Alabama" printed on the back of the bottle.

The Business Advocate is published by the Business Council of Alabama, a non-partisan, statewide business association representing the interests and concerns of nearly 1 million working Alabamians through its member companies and its partnership with the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama. For more information on the Business Council of Alabama, please contact us at (334) 834-6000 or visit us online at bcatoday.org.