

S. Martinelli & Company History Timeline

1843: Stephano Martinelli is born in Valley Maggia, Switzerland. He is the youngest of eight children.

1850: Stephano's older brother, Luigi, age 24, struggled to earn a living in his hometown and decided to leave Switzerland. He set sail for California and the prospect of the gold rush. He reached San Francisco and eventually made his way to the temperate and fertile Pajaro Valley (modern day Watsonville) to farm beans, grain, and eventually apples.

1859: At 15 Stephano joins his older brother in California to help on the farm and finds the apples to be of exceptional quality.

1861: Stephano and Luigi Americanize their names to Stephen and Louis. Stephen starts a soda water business in a lean-to shed on his brother's farm.

1865: Stephen produces ginger ale and a patented Orange Champagne, known as a "delicious temperance drink." He starts to experiment with bottled fermented hard cider.

1868: Stephen introduces fermented hard apple cider made from apples grown on his brother's farm. S. Martinelli & Company is founded.

1885: Stephen moves the cider operation to a "modern cider plant" on Third Street. Annual production is about 10,000-15,000 gallons.

1890: The original recipe for hard cider is awarded the first gold medal for excellence at the California State Fair in Sacramento. As the first of 50 gold medals, this led to the adoption of the brand trademark, "Martinelli's Gold Medal."

1916: Stephen G. Martinelli, Jr. enrolls at UC Berkeley where he develops a pasteurization process to preserve unfermented apple juice in glass bottles, adapting a method used in the canning industry.

1918: Upon the death of his father, Stephen G. Martinelli, Jr. returns home to take over the family business in its 50th anniversary year and introduces his non-alcoholic pasteurized apple juice just as the Prohibition era begins.

1920: Prohibition is in full effect. The 18th Amendment places a constitutional ban on all alcohol throughout the United States. The ban officially begins a new era for S. Martinelli & Company. Non-alcoholic cider becomes their new, flagship product.

1926: According to the *New York World*, the U.S. Navy made Martinelli's their drink of choice during Hawaiian operations.

1929: The Great Depression begins, and people flock to theaters as a temporary escape. According to a 1929 article, Prohibition-era filmmakers used sparkling cider as a substitute for Champagne on set. Paramount, Warner Brothers, and Cecil B. DeMille preferred the Gold Medal brand. Martinelli's became the "Champagne of the movies."

1933: The iconic apple shaped "Golden Apple" glass bottle is created and advertised along with the slogan, "Drink your apple a day," promoting a pure and wholesome product.

1955: Stephen C. Martinelli joins his father representing the third generation to work in the family business.

1962: After the death of his mother, and the subsequent death of his father, Stephen C. Martinelli becomes president of the company. Non-alcoholic sparkling cider is introduced in the green 25.4 ounce champagne style bottle, which is still the company's flagship bottle today.

1968: Stephen C. Martinelli celebrates the company's 100th Anniversary with his sons John, age 11, and Robert, age 6.

1977: Production of hard cider is discontinued to make room for the company's growing non-alcoholic sparkling cider production.

1979: Fourth generation S. John Martinelli joins the company after graduating from Stanford University with a degree in economics.

1985: Increased pressing capacity, a state of the art filtration system, and a high speed sparkling bottling line are installed to quadruple production capacity and keep up with growing demand for S. Martinelli's gold medal juice products.

1991: The first sparkling apple juice blend product, Apple-Cranberry, is introduced.

1994: The 285,000 SF Green Giant frozen food processing plant is purchased to provide badly needed space for the continuing growth of the business,

2002: A state-of-the-art bottling line is installed in the new plant that triples the production capacity of Martinelli's sparkling cider.

2005: The Sparkling Apple blend line is further expanded to include several new flavors: Wild Berry, Raspberry, Cherry, Mango, Peach and Pear.

2007: S. John Martinelli becomes President of the company.

2011: The 200,000 SF Bird's Eye frozen food processing plant on Harvest Drive is acquired to provide even more growth opportunity in the home town of Watsonville.

2012: New innovative products are introduced, including Sparkling Lemonade, Sparkling Prickly Passion Lemonade, and Sparkling Blood Orange.

2015: S. Martinelli & Company opens a Company Store and Tasting Room on Harvest Drive, including a tasting bar and company history museum, which has become a popular destination for visitors to the Monterey Bay.

2016: S. Martinelli & Company plants its first company-owned apple orchards in response to growing demand for flavorful, Martinelli's brand organic blends.