



Camellia Beans Marks 100 Years in 2023

The legacy food company's centennial showcases the importance of food and tradition

Never underestimate the power of a bean. Beans are rooted in ancient cultures and continue to flourish today, making their presence known in foodways around the world. In Louisiana, beans are synonymous with food, family, festivities, and tradition. Camellia Beans has been a part of that legacy for 100 years. 2023 marks the company's 100th anniversary. Join Camellia in celebrating where we've "bean" and how we got there.

Part I: Beans Matter - History of Camellia Beans - Since 1923, Camellia Brand of L.H. Hayward & Company in New Orleans has played a vital role in defining Southern cuisine, one bean at a time, beginning with the red kidney bean. Four generations later, the Hayward family is still hard at work.

Sawyer Hayward, an Englishman, arrived in the 1830s to New Orleans via the West Indies and embarked on what proved to be an immensely successful career in the mercantile and agricultural trading business. **There was a strong demand for dried beans, and the enterprising Hayward supplied dry goods and produce to retail vendors in the French Market.** His son, Lucius H. Hayward Jr., began his career as a horse-and-buggy travelling salesman for the developing National Biscuit Company, later to become known as Nabisco. Eventually, Hayward established himself as a dry-goods broker, and in 1923, opened his own wholesale business along the Mississippi River on Front Street in New Orleans, where he offered dried beans and peas, along with fresh produce. Within two years, when the city's Board of Trade created a committee on beans and peas, L.H. Hayward was prominent enough in the business to be offered a seat.

The city's Caribbean and Creole population had grown up eating dishes that had their origins in Europe. A few were created in the U.S., as red kidney beans were from the North American continent, and in particular a food staple for the Olmec, Maya, Toltec and Teotihuacan and Aztecs in Mexico. Cuba is also credited with "discovering" the kidney bean.

Initially deemed a peasant food, it nonetheless was used in stew-like dishes in Europe such as the Glandoulat, a southwestern French dish in which red kidney beans cooked with pork, carrots, spices, Armagnac, and goose fat. Even though its "common" reputation persisted, it permeated food ways around the world.

In the American South, beans became central to several iconic dishes: red beans and rice in New Orleans and Hoppin' John, which could use black-eyed peas or cowpeas, depending on where in the Carolinas you were.

It was this demand for beans — and red kidney beans — that allowed the Hayward business to grow. Sawyer Hayward's grandson, Lucius H. Hayward Jr. founded the family's bean company. Hayward Jr.'s son, Gordon Hayward created the Camellia Brand and **made the revolutionary leap of packaging the beans in one- and two-pound cellophane bags**, as they are still sold today and as they are found as a staple in many a pantry throughout the southern U.S. This was in response to the mid-century rise of self-serve supermarkets, which overtook service-oriented local markets where grocers would scoop dry goods from barrels for each customer.

In 1947, **trademarking the name Camellia Brand, after Gordon Hayward's mother's favorite flower** — the speckled variety is the oldest perennial in the South — He gave his beans an identity that consumers associate with top quality and a trusted company.

Their instinct is right; the Haywards' longstanding commitment to quality is embodied in their generational relationships with farmers who reserve their very best beans for Camellia. This high ranking has come to be known among growers as "**The Hayward Standard**" and refers to the company's expectation of excellence, from the farmer all the way to the consumer.

In 1974, L.H. Hayward & Company moved to its current location, a larger facility on the outskirts of New Orleans, where it processes and packages its beans in the same fashion. Hayward Jr.'s sons nurtured the business for decades, and now his grandson, Vince Hayward — the fourth generation — is running the company with a thoroughly modern and mindful approach. "Our families have been working together with the same family of farmers for nearly a century, growing beans to a certain standard and getting them to market," says Vince Hayward. "Not only does the public desire our beans, but they also know what to expect from every package. That trusted level of quality is our secret ingredient."

The value of the family heritage can't be overlooked; it's about the trust and respect that have been built over generations between the Hayward's forebears, their growers, and loyal patrons.

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