

125 years of Miele - The milestones

- 1899** On 1st July 1899, the technician **Carl Miele** and the businessman **Reinhard Zinkann** found the company **Miele & Cie. OHG** in Herzebrock, which is later converted into a limited commercial partnership (Miele & Cie. KG). In a former grain mill, the production of cream separators begins with 11 employees, 4 lathes and 1 drilling machine. One year later, the first butter churns are added, consisting of a small oak vat with agitator.
- 1901** The **first Miele washing machine in Europe** comes onto the market. The principle is similar to that of butter churns, with a (larger) wooden tub and a turnstile inside, which is initially moved by a lever.
- 1907** Miele moves to its current headquarters in **Gütersloh**, now with **60 employees**, where a larger plot of land with a railway siding can be acquired. A foundry is built - and the first sales office is opened in Darmstadt.
- 1909** The Miele **company health insurance fund** is founded.
- 1914** In addition to hand-operated washing machines, the **first electric and water-powered models** are built. The **first drum washing machines and laundry centrifuges** for laundries follow in 1924. Cars are even produced from 1912 – but this is abandoned in 1914 due to the anticipated capital requirements.
- 1916** Miele opens its second plant in the neighbouring town of Bielefeld and produces its **first electric motors** here, among other things. Bicycles follow from 1924, vacuum cleaners from 1927 and motorised bicycles from 1931.
- 1926** Miele builds **milking machines**.
- 1929** Miele presents Europe's **first electric dishwasher** for domestic use.
- Also: Introduction of a **company pension scheme** for employees.
- 1931** The first sales company outside Germany is founded in **Switzerland**.
- 1937** Even before the death of the two founders in 1938 and 1939, their sons **Carl Miele junior** and **Kurt Christian Zinkann** join the company management, supported by their younger brothers Heinrich Miele and Erich Zinkann. It is up to

them to steer the company through the further course of National Socialism, including the Second World War.

For Miele, this also means gradually switching production to different types of **ammunition**, which also involves the use of **forced labour**. The reconstruction of the factories after the war and the return to **civilian production** also fall under the responsibility of the second generation. The details of the company's role in the years 1933 to 1945 have been scientifically analysed since 2023 and published as a book*.

- 1951** Miele builds its **third plant in Euskirchen** near Cologne, originally to produce dynamos for bicycles. Today, drives, blowers, pumps and cable drums from Euskirchen are used in washing machines, dryers, dishwashers and vacuum cleaners, for example, and make an important contribution to the longevity and performance of these products.
- 1954** **Rudolf Miele (1954)** and **Dr Peter Zinkann (1957)**, the grandsons of the founders, join the company and soon take on a formative role, later supported by their cousins **Gerhard Miele** and **Dr Reinhard Hector**. As representatives of the second generation, Carl Miele junior and Kurt Christian also remain on board for several decades.
- 1958** The **first fully automatic washing machines** developed and produced by Miele roll off the production line in Gütersloh, soon followed by the **first tumble dryers**.
- 1960** The Bielefeld plant builds **the first fully automatic dishwasher**. Bicycle and motorbike production is discontinued in favour of dishwashers.
- 1962** In **Bürmoos** near Salzburg, Miele starts production of irons, small-format washing machines and spin dryers – It is the fourth plant and the **first production outside Germany**.
- 1965** The **fifth plant opens in Lehrte** near Hanover, where Miele primarily manufactures machines for commercial laundries and for the agricultural sector (milking systems, milk cooling systems, etc.).
- 1966** Miele builds the **first electronically controlled tumble dryer** in Europe.

- 1975** In **Warendorf**, Münsterland, the **sixth plant** begins production of kitchen furniture. In addition, plastic parts such as control panels, vacuum cleaner housings and dishwasher housings are also produced here.
- 1980** The **first Miele sales company outside Europe is founded in Australia**, followed by **South Africa** (1982) and the **USA** (1983). From the 1950s onwards, Miele gradually opens up its European neighbours in the west, south and north. After the fall of the 'Iron Curtain' at the end of 1989, the **Eastern European markets** are gradually added and in 1992, with Japan the first step into **Asia** is taken. Today, Miele is represented in 49 countries by its own sales companies and in many others by local importers.
- 1987** The **Cordes company in Oelde**, which specialises in laundry care appliances, is taken over with around 400 employees – and subsequently expanded to become the Miele Group's competence centre for cookers and ovens. The first in-house production of electronic components using SMD technology (surface-mountable components) is launched in Gütersloh.

On the product side, Miele once again revolutionises dishwashing – with the legendary **cutlery drawer** above the top rack ('Miele invents the third dishwashing level'). Patented, further developed several times, often copied – and never equalled.

The **Miele company museum** opens and was selected as one of 365 locations for the 'Germany – Land of Ideas' campaign, a joined initiative of the German government and the private sector, in 2006. Today, it is one of the most popular company museums in Germany with more than 30,000 visitors a year.

- 1989** With around 650 employees, the family-owned company **Imperial** with factories in **Bünde** and **Arnsberg** is taken over when no internal succession solution can be found there. Imperial is a pioneer of steam cooking in the home, co-inventor of the glass ceramic hob and an important supplier for Miele. At the time of the acquisition, Imperial is also producing large-scale cooking systems for restaurants and canteens, but this is discontinued. Today, Bünde focuses on hobs and steam cookers (also with ovens or microwaves) and Arnsberg on cooker hoods.

The **milking machine product range is sold** at the end of the 1980s – this is also the final withdrawal from the agricultural products sector and serves to further focus on domestic appliances and related products for use in commercial operations, medical facilities and laboratories.

- 1995** In response to the increasing size and complexity of the company, Miele appoints the **first family-independent Executive Directors**. The management model with an equally-footed Executive Board consisting of representatives of the owner families (Executive Directors and Co-Proprietors) and non-family Executive Directors with departmental responsibility is still in place today.
- 1996** Miele publishes its **first environmental report** documenting measures and results in the area of environmental protection. Systematic recording and management of environmental data at the locations had already been started in 1970.

In 2002, the environmental report is replaced by the much more elaborately designed and implemented **sustainability report**, which has been published every two years since then. In 2008, Miele is one of the first German companies to be certified according to the internationally recognised social standard SA 8000, which aims to improve working conditions. In 2014 and 2024, Miele is honoured with the prestigious German Sustainability Award.

For the first time, Miele **produces outside Europe** – some models of its vacuum cleaners. Production starts in **Dongguan**, China, as part of a joint venture with its neighbour Melitta, which manufactures coffee machines there. In 2009, Miele takes over the joint company completely and later moves to a newly built plant. Today, around a third of the 2.5 million vacuum cleaners produced by Miele each year come from Dongguan. The remainder are produced in Bielefeld.

- 1998** Miele presents **InfoControl**, a world first, a networking application for domestic appliances: a compact message receiver provides visual and acoustic notification that the washing machine or tumble dryer has finished its programme, saving many an unnecessary trip to the cellar. This makes Miele a pioneer for 'intelligent living', long before this becomes a trend topic under the heading of 'smart home'. This was later followed, for example, by the hob-

controlled cooker hood, the connection of networked Miele appliances to the photovoltaic system on the roof, mobile appliance control via app, voice control and AI-based cooking assistants. All networking applications bear the **Miele@home** label.

- 1999** On the occasion of the company's 100th anniversary, the second **generational change** begins to take shape. The founder's great-grandson **Dr Reinhard Zinkann**, with the company since 1992 and previously Executive Director of Miele subsidiary Imperial, is appointed to the Miele Group Executive Board as a further representative of his family. Just in time for the anniversary, **Dr Markus Miele** joins the family business from the automotive supplier Hella and joins the Executive Board in mid-2002. At this point, there are still two years left together with the two fathers before Rudolf Miele suddenly passes away in August 2004. At the end of the same year, Dr Peter Zinkann retires from his position as Executive Director.
- 2001** Miele sets new standards in gentle laundry care with the **patented honeycomb drum**. The new drum contains significantly fewer and smaller holes, and a film of water forms on the inwardly curved honeycomb structure, allowing the laundry to glide gently. This means that delicate textiles feel like new for longer and also last longer overall.
- 2004** In **Uničov** in the Czech Republic, the **third Miele plant** outside Germany, washing machines and dryers for small businesses as well as dishwashers are produced. 2013, the production of tumble dryers moves from Gütersloh to Uničov, while washing machines for small businesses move to Gütersloh.
- 2005** Miele **sells the production of kitchen furniture**, as a strategic dilemma emerged in the 1990s: With the increasing success of built-in appliances, the brand studios of other kitchen manufacturers become increasingly important as a sales channel – which leads to Miele being perceived as competition. The sale serves to further strengthen the appliance business but includes the continued use of the 'Miele The Kitchen' brand by the purchaser for five years.
- 2009** In order to supplement the capacity of the electronics production in Gütersloh, Miele builds its **2nd electronics plant in Braşov**, Romania. Intended as a quality assurance measure, the plant will initially produce simpler electronics

with a high proportion of manual labour, most of which previously came from suppliers. Today, Braşov also produces complex and highly automated electronic components.

2010 Miele has an excellent reputation for cleaning and disinfecting medical equipment and laboratory technology – and is now also launching **large-capacity sterilisers** from its plant in Bürmoos. This makes Miele a full-service provider for all reprocessing stages, including planning services for larger sterile goods departments, process chemicals, service and data management. Medical technology at Miele is part of the **Professional business unit**, the basis for which was laid 100 years ago today with the first commercial washing machines. Commercial dishwashers were later added as a further pillar.

2017 Miele acquires 75.1% of the shares in the Italian medical technology specialist **Steelco Group** and the remaining 24.9 per cent in 2021. Here, Miele bundles its entire hospital project business, i.e., the complete equipment for centralised sterile supply in hospitals. This branch is to be further strengthened by Miele contributing its subsidiary Steelco to a joint venture with the Swiss industrial holding company Metall Zug AG, in which it holds 67% the shares. Metall Zug contributes parts of its Belimed Group.

At the IFA, Miele presents its revolutionary **Dialog Oven**, in which electromagnetic waves that are as gentle as they are deep set in motion an even cooking process that is continuously monitored and adjusted. In addition, these waves can be combined with the conventional cooking processes of the oven to achieve gentle, fast and flavourful cooking. Different ingredients can also be cooked together on one tray and are ready at the same time.

2018 With **Miele Venture Capital GmbH**, Miele is focusing on tapping into good ideas from outside at an early stage, in addition to its in-house expertise and innovations. Thematically, the new subsidiary focuses on creative solutions that could be a good fit for the Group's products, services, value chains, business models or manufacturing processes. Cooperations range from development projects or management support to direct equity participation.

The company's own **day-care centre 'IdeenReich'** opens opposite the main plant in Gütersloh. The name says it all, as the educational concept is aimed at

awakening children's interest in technical and scientific contexts. The company daycare centre offers childcare until 6 p.m. on weekdays all year round.

2019 To **strengthen innovation and growth**, Miele replaces the three traditional pillars of technology, marketing and administration with a matrix structure. This consists of central functions, sales regions and eight new business units with comprehensive operational responsibility for their respective businesses. To expand digital expertise, the IT and Smart Home areas will be significantly increased; a separate location will be established in Amsterdam for digital marketing and sales. All of this will be announced in October 2019. It is part of the core of the 'Design2Excellence' programme launched in 2018 and lays the foundation for strategic acquisitions such as the outdoor cooking specialist **Otto Wilde Grillers** and the Belgian dust bag manufacturer and long-standing Miele supplier **Eurofilters**.

Shortly before the end of the year, Miele launches a **second washing machine plant in Ksawerów**, Poland, with the production of a new entry-level series. In the long term, a division of washing machine production between the Gütersloh and Ksawerów sites is intended to help secure the profitability of Miele's largest and most traditional product group.

2023 To further expand its promising business in North America, Miele announces to build its 16th **plant in the US state of Alabama to manufacture large-volume ranges and ovens** specially designed for the USA, Canada and Mexico. Production is scheduled to start at the end of 2024.

2024 In the summer of 2024, Miele and its employees around the world **celebrate 125 years of quality and innovation** in the service of customers and the environment. The eleven employees in Herzebrock, East Westphalia, have grown into a global team of more than 22,000 colleagues. The challenges facing the world in the early 2020 are significant. They range from dealing with the pandemic to the economic consequences of the war in Ukraine, with a global slump in demand for household appliances and soaring costs in almost every sector.

The goal is to **return to growth**. To achieve this, Miele can build on its strong brand, a premium and quality standard unique in the industry, inspiring products

and committed, creative teams in 49 countries – and on its ability to make the right, sometimes difficult, decisions in challenging times. This has been proven time and again over the past 125 years.

In the last financial year, the Miele Group achieved a **turnover of € 4.96 bn**. Eight of the 15 factories are located in Germany. Here, Miele has committed to **investing a total of € 500 mm** by the end of 2028. Further locations are in Austria, China, the Czech Republic, Romania and Poland. Added to this are the two sites of the Italian medical technology specialist Steelco Group, which has been part of the Miele Group since 2017. The new site in the USA will be the 16th plant, starting production at the end of 2024.

To further strengthen **Miele's medical technology business**, a joint venture has been established with the Swiss industrial holding Metall Zug AG, in which Miele holds a 67% stake. Miele is represented by its own sales and service companies in 49 countries with more than 200 own brand stores.

The **Executive Board of the Miele Group** consists of Olaf Bartsch (Finance & Administration), Dr Stefan Breit (Technology), Dr Axel Kniehl (Marketing & Sales), Dr Markus Miele (Executive Director and Co -Proprietor), Rebecca Steinhage (Human Resources & Corporate Affairs) and Dr Reinhard Zinkann (Executive Director and Co -Proprietor).

* Dr. Andrea H. Schneider-Braunberger, Miele im Nationalsozialismus, published by Siedler Verlag, Munich 2023, ISBN 978-3-8275-0188-2

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