



*Jeffrey T. Sanfilippo*





*The Sanfilippo family in 2016. Photo courtesy of April Graves, Light Drawn Studios.*

“Like father, like son,” rings true for Barrington Hills resident Jeffrey Sanfilippo—just as it did for his father, Jasper; for Jasper’s father, John; and for John’s father, Gaspare Sanfilippo. Gaspare and John emigrated from Sicily, Italy in 1910, settling in Chicago, and in 1922 started a family company shelling pecans by hand around the kitchen table. One could call their business story “nuts” and be correct.

According to statistics, only 40% of family-owned companies turn into second-generation businesses; 13% pass successfully to a third generation; and only 3% to a fourth generation. Such was the challenge for fourth-generation Jeffrey Sanfilippo and his siblings when their father, Jasper B. Sanfilippo (1931-2020) retired in 2007, and Jeffrey took over as CEO of John B. Sanfilippo & Son, Inc. (JBSS), parent company of Fisher Nut, headquartered in Elgin, Illinois.

Building on his great-grandfather, grandfather, and father’s successes—with help from his four siblings and a strong company culture of teamwork and innovative spirit—Jeffrey guided John B. Sanfilippo & Son, Inc. to phenomenal success. On March 14, 2022, the company hit a milestone: its 100th anniversary. This was celebrated in New York City at the Nasdaq Exchange by Jeffrey, surrounded by family and key JBSS leaders, ringing the closing bell.

# TIME PASSAGES

**JEFFREY T. SANFILIPPO IS THE 4TH-GENERATION FAMILY MEMBER TO LEAD JOHN B. SANFILIPPO & SON**

story by *Gregory Leifel* | photography by *Linda M. Barrett*

## HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

The Gaspare Sanfilippo Nut Company began in 1922 as a pecan shelling operation with a small storefront in Chicago by Jeffrey’s great-grandfather, Gaspare and his son, John. The family and its 150 employees shelled pecans by hand for 12 hours a day, six days a week, and could produce 40,000 pounds a month. Gaspare Sanfilippo was able to shell 45 pounds of pecans in a single day. In 1929, the company purchased two automated nut-cracking machines, stepping up production to 40 pounds per hour.

Following Gaspare’s death in 1947, his son John assumed leadership and, with John’s son, Jasper, working in the factory, and his daughter, Ana, in the office, the company name changed to John B. Sanfilippo & Son. Jasper had

a natural inclination for mechanics, having invented his first machine for processing nuts at 12. Jasper graduated from the University of Illinois with a degree in mechanical engineering and industrial management. In 1960, the company opened its first facility on Montrose Avenue in Chicago and began investing in automated machinery.

In 1963, upon the death of his father, Jasper took over the company and expanded its product lines. In 1968, the company entered the private label nut market for Certified Grocers in Chicago. The company built a 70,000 square foot processing and cold storage facility in 1973 on Touhy Avenue in Des Plaines, Illinois. It also acquired Evon’s and Prairie State Nut brands, expanding their retail business into central Midwestern states. In 1976, they





built an additional 30,000 square foot plant in Elk Grove Village. Candy packaging, dry roasting, and glass jar equipment were installed in the new facility in 1977. Growth continued and in 1980 they built a 140,000 square foot facility on Busse Road in Elk Grove Village and increased that facility over the next five years to 475,000 square feet.

#### GOING PUBLIC

Vertical integration, allowing full control from the moment nuts are harvested to distribution, began in 1987 with the construction of a facility near the farmers, in Bainbridge, Georgia, to process peanuts. In 1991, the company went public on the Nasdaq Stock Exchange. Proceeds from the IPO were used to build facilities in Garysburg, North Carolina, to process Virginia peanuts, and in Gustine, California to process walnuts. The company acquired Sunshine Nut Company in Selma, Texas to expand its presence in the commercial ingredients market. And in 1995, it purchased its first national brand, Fisher Nuts, from Proctor & Gamble.

Consolidating its Chicago-based operations, in 2005 the company broke ground on a new, one-million-square foot corporate headquarters in Elgin, Illinois. Jasper would say, "Building the corporate headquarters in Elgin and moving into this state-of-the-art facility was the highlight of my career." After the company was settled in its new location, Jasper stepped down after 43 years at the helm and Jeffrey Sanfilippo was named CEO. Under Jeffrey's leadership, product lines were diversified and in 2010 the company acquired Orchard Valley Harvest Inc., gaining access into the produce section of retail stores. The company acquired the



Jeffrey Sanfilippo in New York City for the closing bell at Nasdaq.





*Rusty and Jeffrey Sanfilippo stand in their grand Perfume Passage at home in Barrington Hills. The galleries are designed to walk guests through time to the Golden Age of Perfume. The exquisitely curated and artfully presented perfume galleries showcase an international collection of beautiful perfume bottles, compacts, ephemera, and vanity items, some dating back to 2500 B.C.*

Squirrel Nut Brand in 2017 to expand its indulgent snacks portfolio. Fisher Nut brands and packaging were revolutionized with a new clear can and stand-up bags, increasing market share. New products were added such as Fisher Nut Oven Roasted, Never Fried Nuts for health conscience consumers, along with nut flours and other plant protein-based products.

#### A GLOBAL LEADER

Today John B. Sanfilippo & Son Inc. is a global leader in nut and nut snack products with four major brands: Fisher Nut, Orchard Valley Harvest, Squirrel Brand, and Southern Style Nuts, in addition to scores of private brands. A strong business model and a commitment to provide an unmatched experience for customers and consumers have fueled the company's success along with an appreciation for the contributions from all their employees.

One of the most impressive details in their million-square foot headquarters in Elgin is a sign above the employee suggestion box, which shows an impressively high percentage of employee recommendations implemented into their operations. This demonstrates one of the great traits and abilities of Jeffrey Sanfilippo: to listen to people closely. Kelly Day, Senior Director of

Administration for JBSS said, "I have worked for Jeffrey Sanfilippo for over 25 years, and it has been a great adventure! He genuinely cares about his employees, and he listens, mentors, and empowers us to do our best work. Jeffrey fosters an environment that makes everyone feel like family and I am fortunate to have such a wonderful boss and friend." Like father, like son.

As the company heads into its next 100 years, it will build on its legacy with a focus on sustainability and plant-based proteins, research and development, consumer insights, and product innovation. "I'm excited about growing our brands in the future and building the path toward \$2 billion in sales," said Jeffrey.

Like his father, people and community remain a business priority, and JBSS is expanding stewardship overseas to help economically disadvantaged nut growers within its network build stronger infrastructure. The company has begun investing in Africa's farming communities, which are among the world's largest cashew growers. Similarly, JBSS is supporting indigenous South American tribes with the extremely difficult harvest and collection of Brazil nuts in the Amazon.

"As we celebrate our 100-year anniversary, we reflect on everyone who has played such a significant role in our company's success," said Jeffrey. "We are honored to have such talented and dedicated employees who have served the company throughout our history. We couldn't have reached this remarkable milestone without their dedication."



*The Perfume Passageway is reminiscent of the back alleys and doorways of buildings in London, Paris, and Brussels where two sides across an alleyway were enclosed with a glass ceiling and made into small storefronts off the main avenues. Horse carriages would pull into the covered alleys to dispatch their patrons for shopping.*



## A PASSION FOR COLLECTING

JEFFREY SANFILIPPO'S SUCCESSION of his father in the family's business wasn't the only commonality, as Jeffrey has a passion for collecting historical items. Jeffrey's father, Jasper—known worldwide for his passion for Automatic Music Instruments and other mechanical marvels, including an 1890 French Salon Carousel and a 1927 Theater Pipe Organ housed in his home—amassed one of the finest collections in the world. Jasper leveraged the collection for charity fundraising and educational purposes.

Jeffrey and his siblings helped to secure their father and mother's collection and philanthropic legacy with the creation of the Sanfilippo Family Foundation, all to the benefit of local, regional, and national charities, and tour guests from all over the world. To date, more than 17 million dollars have been raised for charities at the Sanfilippo Estate for some 300 charities who serve our communities.

Jeffrey moved his family back into his parent's home in 2016 to help care for Jasper and his mom, Marian, as they aged and to help secure Jasper and Marian's legacy. In 2018, Jeffrey added on to the home to display his own passion and interest in collecting fragrance-related artifacts. "During my



PERFUME  
PASSAGE  
FOUNDATION®

junior year of college, I took a semester to study abroad in Madrid, Spain. I was shopping in a department store getting school supplies and wandered to the fragrance department and found a Spanish cologne I liked called "Campos de Ibiza." I wore the fragrance the whole time I was in Spain," said Jeffrey. "When I returned to school back in the states, I packed the bottle away in a box, only to discover it three years later when I was moving. The moment I smelled the cologne, every memory of my time and friendships in Spain came flooding back to me. I wondered how a fragrance could do that, so I began to learn about the history of fragrance. I became fascinated with it and the artistry of the bottles and packaging. I collected them on my travels, and, like my father, my collection grew quickly."

### THE PERFUME PASSAGE

Today, the Perfume Passage Collection contains over 6,000 bottles and related items, many on display in four world-class galleries. The oldest bottle dates to 2,500 B.C.E., from Bactria in ancient Central Asia. In 2019, Jeffrey and his spouse, Rusty, formed the Perfume Passage Foundation, a not-for-profit 501c3 that displays and preserves the history, beauty, and artistry of perfume bottles, compacts, ephemera, and related vanity items. It includes a





research library housing the archives of the International Perfume Bottle Association and other historical data. And, like his father, Jeffrey shares his collection in service to others with educational tours and collector industry conferences.

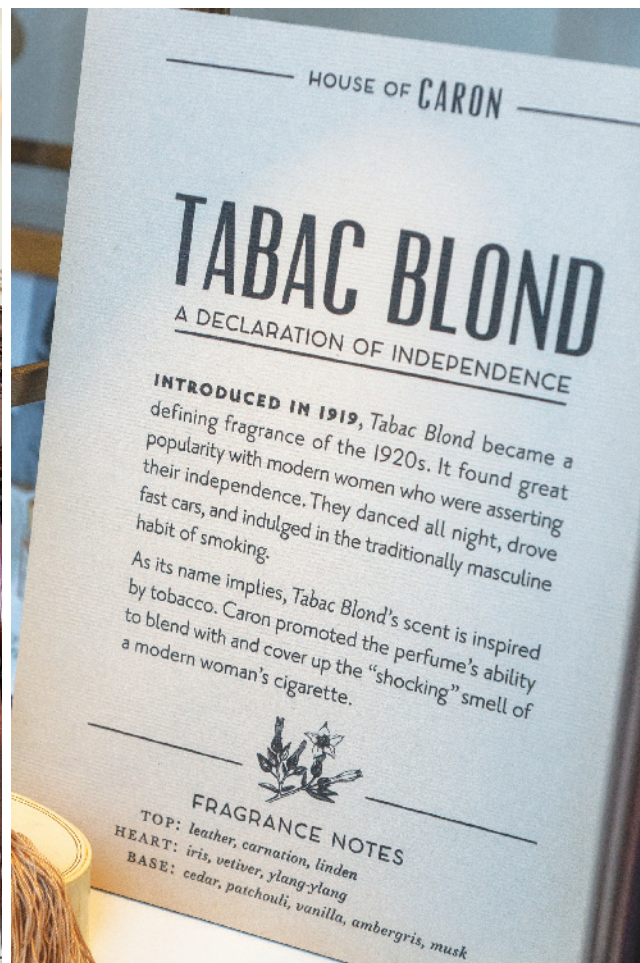
## RAISED IN BARRINGTON HILLS

A soft-spoken young man, Jeffrey attended grade school in Fox River Grove, later annexed, through the effort of his father and others, into Barrington Hills. Jeffrey and his siblings went on to Barrington High School, where Jeffrey ran track and cross country. Jeffrey, like his siblings, John, James, Lisa, and Jasper, Jr., worked at the nut plant in Elk Grove Village during summers and school breaks, shelling nuts and learning various aspects of the business from the ground up. This began their education on the operations of the family business and gave them all insights into the type of work they wanted to do in the future.

“We quickly learned college was a pretty good option after shelling nuts all day, every day” said Jeffrey’s brother, James. “While they worked hard in the factory,” said their mom, Marian, “Jasper always gave them time off for school and family events.” Family was always a priority for the Sanfilippos. To this day, all five of Jasper and Marian’s grown children are involved and serve on the JBSS Board of Directors, while CEO Jeffrey and COO Jasper, Jr. shepherd day-to-day operations. And all five children are involved and serve on the Sanfilippo Family Foundation.

While many family businesses often guaranteed a position for family members, it can also be a detriment if the personal passion for the business is lacking. Jeffrey went to college at University of Southern California where he studied International Relations and Economics. Upon graduation, he worked for five years in the film production business.





Above: *Tabac Blond* is Jeffrey Sanfilippo's favorite fragrance and is showcased at the beginning of the *Perfume Passage*.

Left: Jeffrey Sanfilippo's favorite fragrance *Tabac Blond* from the early 1900s Parisian perfume house, *Maison du Caron*, was the catalyst for the design of *Perfume Passage*.

"I wanted to explore another business, learn some lessons, become a better leader, and see if the nut business was really a passion of mine," said Jeffrey. "I was fortunate to have valuable experiences in various aspects of the film industry and produced a B-movie called, 'The Boneyard', and enjoyed that work. But we are a very close family, and the family business was calling. The company expanded into a new facility in California to serve growing retail customers and I joined the business in 1992 to lead West Coast operations."

#### BECOMING A PUBLIC COMPANY CEO

Jasper's strong mentorship and faith in his son became the stepping stone to Jeffrey's full integration into the family business and eventually its CEO and Chairman. Jeffrey completed his MBA in 2009 from Lake Forest Graduate School while working full time. Delivering a speech in March 2022 on the floor of the Nasdaq Exchange celebrating the company's 100th anniversary, Jeffrey stated, "To achieve our company's ambitious goals, we are building a diverse and inclusive culture, where everyone contributes to the creation and innovation of real food that is a force for good to nourish people and our planet."

"My parents taught us that family and family time is a priority, and at the end of the day, no matter our differences, we always come together," Jeffrey said. "My father demonstrated this by always being available to support his children's activities. Despite all the long hours our father worked building the company, he made time to attend our sporting and Boy Scout events, horse riding competitions, and birthday parties. We worked as a family in the house when Dad's collection was growing and watched as the house expanded to accommodate it. To this day, we still take our annual Thanksgiving walk in the woods as a family and have regular family dinners and outings with mom." Mrs. Sanfilippo turned 87 in March.

#### A PARISIAN PASSAGE

Jeffrey and Rusty completed their fragrance gallery addition to the family home in 2019, which consists of four galleries: a Parisian Passage from the 1900s, an Antique Apothecary (original interior from an 1882 Massachusetts drug store that operated for 100 years), a 1920s era Art Deco Gallery, and a room called The Vault, which highlights special pieces in the collection.

"We want guests to step back through time as they view each gallery as





Every portion of the Perfume Passage and its four museum-quality galleries are meticulously presented and documented.

a historical marker in the development of the fragrance industry's story; to experience the worldly innovation, the artistry, the collaborations, and the social events that drove the industry," said Rusty Sanfilippo. "We showcase the contributions from science, art, technology, and cultures that defined an industry and helped make it irresistible to consumers. With displays on immensely successful female entrepreneurs like Elizabeth Arden and Helena Rubinstein, to innovative African American beauty product designers, to Czechoslovakian, Tiffany, Rene Lalique, and Baccarat art glass collaborations, the personal beauty industry is diverse with fascinating stories. We combine this with educating guests on how fragrances are produced from flowers. Our research library furthers interest in this fascinating history for other fragrance collectors and those with a passion for art and design." *More information on the Perfume Passage Foundation and touring can be found at [perfumepassage.org](http://perfumepassage.org).*

## BUILDING COMMUNITY

Marian and Jasper Sanfilippo passed on to their children the responsibility and joy of giving back to their community. Jeffrey Sanfilippo and his siblings shepherd the Sanfilippo Foundation, and Jeffrey and Rusty, the Perfume Passage Foundation, to create community and preserve and showcase history. Like father, like son—this mindset built a close-knit working relationship with non-profit organizations that make our communities better. At many charity events, Jeffrey welcomes guests into the home as his parents did, providing the personal touch that you're a family guest upon entry.

The intimacy and diversity of the guests seeing the collections over the



## THE WORK OF THE SANFILIPPO FOUNDATION

By Gregory Leifel

Our Mission: to showcase the Sanfilippo Collection of Automatic Music Instruments through educational tours, and through charity fundraising events and consultations that serve Children & Families, Health & Human Services, and Arts & Culture.

Since 2002, the Sanfilippo Family Foundation has conducted thousands of educational tours of its Collections; hosted hundreds of Theater Organ and artistic Concerts; and partnered with over 350 nonprofit organizations to assist them with fundraising events. The Foundation has facilitated recruitment of new supporters to the charities and helped guide their organizations to new growth. More than 17 million dollars has been raised at these events for charity since the Foundation's inception. Additionally, hundreds of hours of charity consultations have been provided, along with community meetings space, donations, and behind-the-scenes, private assistance. It has helped mentor young theater organists; provided artistic opportunity for musicians, dancers, storytellers, student filmmakers, actors, and singers of all kinds, including operatic. It has drawn visitors to Barrington from all over the world, given school students engaging history lessons, and provided seniors a nostalgic journey back in time.

All of this could not be accomplished without the dedication of our supporters, donors, and sponsors, the Village of Barrington Hills, and our guests. We thank you all.

*For a list of the charity organizations served and more information on the Sanfilippo Foundation visit: [SanfilippoFoundation.org](http://SanfilippoFoundation.org). For photos, videos, and stories of the Collection visit: [Facebook.com/SanfilippoFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/SanfilippoFoundation).*

decades has truly made a visit to their Barrington Hills home a unique, community building, and defining experience. And for all of the family's success, when one visits, there still remains a gathering-around-the-kitchen-table feel, started by Gaspare Sanfilippo in 1922, continued by John, Jasper, and now Jeffrey Sanfilippo and his siblings. Like father, like sons, and like daughter.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the Sanfilippo story is when you



ask anyone in this family how they did all of it. You'll always hear from each a recognition and appreciation for all of the people who helped them along the way. U

QB contributing writer and Sanfilippo Foundation Executive Director, Gregory Leifel, has helped the Sanfilippo Foundation achieve its mission.