

100 years of Franke: four entrepreneurs from two families

Four strong entrepreneurial personalities from the two company families Franke and Pieper have largely shaped the history of Franke:

Hermann Franke, the founder and industrial pioneer, recognized the potential of stainless steel at an early stage. He started manufacturing welded sinks, and thereby laid the foundation for the industrial development of Franke.

Walter Franke took over the company after the sudden death of his father. He expanded the sink production by entering the commercial kitchen sector, and expanded business activities beyond the Swiss border by purchasing companies in Western Europe or setting them up himself. Walter Franke was one of the fathers of the kitchen technology standards that are still used today.

Willi Pieper acquired the Franke company from his friend Walter Franke, and developed it further with a systematic approach and a clear strategy. Willi Pieper's goal was to become the Number One worldwide in selected niche markets. With the purchase of the Progressive Corporation in Philadelphia USA, he took the first big step towards becoming a global company.

Michael Pieper turned a company with a turnover of CHF 480 million in 1989 into the globally leading provider of intelligent systems for domestic kitchens, professional food service, professional coffee preparation, intelligent systems for the beverage industry and comprehensive washroom solutions, with a turnover of around CHF 2.5 billion. He realized the potential of Eastern European countries, Asia, South America and Africa at an early stage, and consistently and successfully built the company into today's global Franke Artemis Group.

100 years of Franke: The history of the Franke Artemis Group

The Hermann Franke era: From a small workshop to an industrial pioneer (1911 – 1938)

1911 The “Spenglerei (*Plumber’s Workshop*) Hermann Franke“ was founded in Rorschach, Switzerland on the 1st April. Employing 30 people, Hermann Franke built oven tops, skylights and dormer windows, making deliveries throughout Switzerland. He started to manufacture the first sink units.

1931 Manufacture of the first sink unit in nickeline, monel and later in stainless steel.

1935 Building of a new factory with office and residential accommodation in Aarburg, Switzerland.

1936 Manufacture of the first sink units from chrome-nickel steel. The first completely welded, seamless sink unit was manufactured a year later. Franke established connections with the wholesale sanitary trade and built up a sales organisation.

1939 Hermann Franke passed away on the 25th January 1939.

The Walter Franke era: From a factory to an international company (1939 – 1974)

1939 Walter Franke takes over his father’s company.

1941 Start of the business relationship and friendship with Willi Pieper.

1945 Expansion of the factory equipment. Expansion of the sink unit range and the start of the manufacture of complete kitchens. First exports to neighbouring European country. Walter Franke draws up a model for the standardisation of the private kitchen, which makes the mass production of kitchens possible. A branch operation is set up in Ettlingen, Germany. Over the next few years, Franke founds or purchases subsidiaries in Germany, Belgium, Austria, Italy, France, Holland, Switzerland, Sweden and England. Licences were also awarded in Greece and Spain.

The Willi Pieper era: The step towards becoming a global company (1975 – 1989)

1975 Willi Pieper takes over the company.

1978 With the purchase of the Progressive Corporation in Philadelphia, USA, Franke makes its first venture into the USA with its own company. This is an important step, aimed at generating know-how and increasing the export ratio further.

1980 Acquisition of frifri aro sa in La Neuveville, Switzerland.

- 1981 Franke expands into other international markets with licence agreements for sink manufacture in Egypt and Chile.
- 1984 Purchase of the Kaffeemaschinenfabrik Augsburg AG (*Augsburg coffee machine factory*) and with it the start of the manufacture of professional coffee machines.
- 1985 Franke brings its own range of facilities for public and semi-public washrooms onto the market, the Franke Hygiene System, now known as Franke Washroom Systems.
- 1988 Introduction of the group-wide divisional organisation, with the main divisions of Franke Kitchen Systems and Contract Group (today: Franke Foodservice Systems).

The Michael Pieper era: On the way to becoming the world leader (1990 - 2011)

- 1989 Michael Pieper becomes the owner and CEO.
- 1990 The important acquisition of Carron Phoenix Limited with 400 employees in Falkirk, Scotland takes place – a manufacturer of synthetic sinks, among other things.
- 1992 Franke acquires the licence operation in Greece.
- 1993 Franke takes over the Spanish company Soberana SA. Companies are also founded in the former Eastern Block, in the Czech Republic and in Poland.
- 1994 Franke takes over the Finnish Hackman Meka Group, the Polish Gastopol Sp. Z.o.o and IRC Parts & Supplies Inc., TN, USA. Companies are also set up in Portugal, Hungary and Estonia.
- 1995 Franke opens a production facility for domestic sinks and McDonald's kitchens in Heshan City, China. Blefa GmbH in Kreuztal, Germany, with 270 employees, is also acquired.
- 1996 The domestic sink company Federal Home Products in Ruston, USA , is taken over.
- 1997 Entry into the Brazilian market through the acquisition of the sink manufacturer Douat Ltda.
- 1998 The sink manufacturer Kindred Industries Ltd., Canada, is acquired by Franke.
- 1999 A factory for the production of sinks is built in India, and the sink manufacturer City Metal Products Ltd. is taken over in South Africa. In the following years, Franke buys or sets up companies in Germany, Holland, Denmark, England, Italy, Turkey and Russia. The markets in the USA, Australia, India, the Philippines, China and South Africa are also expanded or developed.
- 2002 The Franke Group consists of the following divisions: Franke Kitchen Systems , Franke Foodservice Systems, Franke Washroom Systems, Franke Coffee Systems and Franke Beverage Systems.

Around 23 companies are acquired between 2002 und 2010. The most important acquisitions are as follows:

2002 Franke purchases bremer Kaffeemaschinen GmbH in Germany, with 101 employees.

2005 Franke takes over the Faber Group with headquarters in Fabriano, Italy, with 1,375 employees. Faber is a leading manufacturer of cooker hoods, with 11 production sites. In the same year, Franke also takes over the fittings manufacturer AquaRotter GmbH in Germany, with 275 employees.

2007 Franke acquires the South African Defy Appliances (Pty) Ltd. with 3,500 employees.

2010 Realization of the forward-looking structure of the Franke Artemis Group: The industrial business is divided into the sub-groups Franke Kitchen Systems Group and Franke Commercial Systems Group. The non-industrial areas are grouped together as the Franke Asset Management Group and the Franke Artemis Real Estate Group.

2011 Franke celebrates its centenary. The company is the global leader in the areas of Franke Kitchen Systems and Franke Foodservice Systems and has a leading market position in its other activities, Franke Washroom Systems, Franke Coffee Systems and Franke Beverage Systems. Since 1989, the Group has invested CHF 2.7 billion in the future of the company, financed exclusively from self-generated cash flow.