



## The Fiesta® Tableware Company, formerly known as The Homer Laughlin China Company™, & Fiesta® Dinnerware History

- 1840s The pottery industry in East Liverpool begins with the manufacture of yellow ware from the rich deposits of local clay; utilizing the Ohio River to transport products throughout the region.
- 1870-1879 Public preference shifts to a more sophisticated white ware imported from England. East Liverpool City Council offered \$5,000 in seed money to someone who would build and operate a pottery for the production of white ware.
- 1871 The Laughlin Brothers (Homer and Shakespeare) form a partnership to sell pottery to which their proposal is accepted by the East Liverpool city council. They build a two-kiln plant on the banks of the Ohio River to produce white ware as the alternative to yellow.
- 1877 Shakespeare pursues other interests; the business continues under Homer's direction and becomes: The Homer Laughlin China Works.
- 1880-1889 Homer Laughlin becomes one of the better-known manufacturers of ceramic dinnerware and toilet ware in the country. In 1889 a young bookkeeper from Steubenville, Ohio, William Edwin Wells, is hired to manage the books and eventually, the business.
- 1897-1899 Homer Laughlin retires and sells the business to Wells and a financial partner, Louis I. Aaron of Pittsburgh. Two more plants are built to support operations. A key customer contributing to the company's rapid growth included the F.W. Woolworth Company, the country's fastest growing variety (5 & 10 cent) store chain and the American Cereal Company of Chicago, who was packing oatmeal bowls in Mother's Oats boxes.
- 1902-1909 A tract of land on the opposite side of the Ohio River (today known as Newell, W.Va.) is purchased from the Newell family. A subsidiary company, the North American Manufacturing Company, is formed to develop the town. Lots are laid out, water and sewer systems are installed, electric power is secured, and a suspension bridge is built across the Ohio River, connecting the new community with East Liverpool and a trolley line is built to transport workers across the river. Plant No. 4 is constructed in 1905-1906, the largest pottery plant ever built, bringing production to 300,000 pieces per day, (10% of the U. S. production capacity). The company officially moves its headquarters and operations to the Newell location.
- 1910-1914 Louis Aaron retires and is succeeded as president by his son, Marcus Aaron, as rapid growth continues. Plant No. 5 opens with 16 additional kilns—78 ware and 60 decorating.



- 1917 W.E. Wells writes to the Woolworth Company "...this is the first time in history that the purchases of any one concern from any one pottery firm have reached the million mark in one year."
- 1920-1928 The early 1920's marked the most revolutionary change that had ever hit the pottery industry. Homer Laughlin replaces intermittent kilns with continuous firing tunnel kilns at Plant Nos. 4 and 5 to increase production. New Plant Nos. 6 and 7 open. Plants on the East End are phased out in favor of the largest Homer Laughlin plant, No. 8. with 800 employees and a total capacity equal to 160 upright kilns, all for making ware for Woolworth's, at an average price of 72 cents per dozen. That amounts to 16.7 million pieces of ware sold to one customer in one year.
- 1927 Frederick Hurten Rhead is hired as design director in 1927. Rhead's 15-year reign proved to be the most prolific period of new product introductions in the company's history. Rhead designed Virginia Rose as well as the several Eggshell shapes. Rhead's most noted accomplishment was Fiesta®. Fiesta shapes were created in an Art Deco style with concentric circles highlighting the bright colors.
- 1930 W.E. Wells retires, and is replaced by his eldest son, Joseph M. Wells, Sr.
- 1936 With great fanfare, The Homer Laughlin China Company introduces Fiesta at the Pittsburgh China & Glass Show in January 1936. Shapes are created in an Art Deco style with concentric circles highlighting the bright colors. Color pallet includes Red, Yellow, Cobalt Blue, Green, and Ivory – at the Pittsburgh China & Glass Show.
- 1938 One million dozen pieces of Fiesta are produced!
- 1939 Automatic jiggering replaces hand jiggering, further revolutionizing production.
- 1940-1949 World War II begins. Homer Laughlin produces china for the armed forces, post-war production peaks. The company employs 3,000 and produces over 10 million dozen pieces of ware.
- 1940 Marcus Aaron retires as president and is succeeded by his son, Marcus Lester Aaron (M. L. Aaron) who serves as president for 48 years.
- 1950-1959 The 1950s sees a large increase in imported dinnerware produced in countries with very low labor costs. This competition takes its toll on the American industry; many potteries do not survive the



decade. Homer Laughlin's management decides to shift its emphasis from consumer dinnerware to commercial ware for the hotel and restaurant trade, introducing the "Best China" brand of vitrified hotel china.

Fashion dictates a change in Fiesta's color palette; softer pastels emerge.

In 1959 J.M. Wells, Sr., retires, turning over the management of the company to the third generation of his family, Joe Wells, Jr.

- 1960-1970      Color trends move back to brighter colors and Fiesta follows. Homer Laughlin continues its hospitality push.
- 1973            Fiesta retires after 37 years of production.
- 1980-1985     The company begins to produce lead-free china for the hospitality industry, setting an industry standard and the stage for today's Fiesta.
- 1983            Produced the last semi-vitrified supermarket promotion for Alpha Beta in California.
- 1986            Fiesta is reintroduced in March of 1986 at the Charleston, WV, as a Cultural Center as a vitrified body, lead-free, in new updated colors: White, Black, Cobalt, Rose, and Apricot.
- Joe Wells, Jr., retires and is replaced as executive vice president by his son, Joe Wells, III.
- Limited collections are produced in Lilac and Chartreuse. Sapphire is produced for 16 months exclusively for Bloomingdales and to local West Virginia retailers.
- M.L. Aaron retires as president and is succeeded by his son, Marcus (Pete) Aaron, II. The company is now in the hands of both families' 4<sup>th</sup> generation.
- 1997            The 500 millionth piece of Fiesta is produced. Five hundred numbered Raspberry Presentation Bowls are produced to commemorate the event.
- 1998            Fifteen Raspberry Bowls are donated to three charity auctions held in the Newell/East Liverpool area in June and August of 1998. The \$75,000+ proceeds of these auctions go to designated educational scholarship funds.



- 2000's As Fiesta begins to flourish in the retail sector and Homer Laughlin becomes a leading force in the foodservice china industry, the aging factories undergo many changes. In 2002-2005 state-of-the-art computerized kilns are installed throughout plants 6, 7 and 8. Much-needed new forming and glazing equipment is installed and a self-contained "plant within a plant" is built at Plant #8. Homer Laughlin prepares to enter the new millennium as the industry leader in both the foodservice and retail businesses.
- 2000 Juniper and Cinnabar are introduced.
- 2001 Sunflower and Plum are introduced. Pearl Grey and Juniper retire.
- 2002 Joe Wells, III, with his sisters, Jean Wicks and Elizabeth McIlvain, with the purchase of the Aaron's stockholder interests, end a 104-year partnership with the Aaron family. Joe Wells, III, is elected president and chief executive officer.
- Shamrock is introduced. Yellow retires.
- 2005 Rose retires.
- 2006 Heather is introduced. Periwinkle Blue retires.
- 2007 Evergreen emerges on the Fiesta color palette. Fiesta makes the transition to a lifestyle brand with new items like bakeware, adding licensing partners in glassware, table linens, cutlery, gadgets, and more.
- Fiesta opens its first Fiesta branded showroom in the Tabletop Market building, 41 Madison Ave, NY, NY, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor.
- 2008 Homer Laughlin gears up for its 75th Anniversary year with a new item and color, 3-Piece Baking Bowl Set in Marigold. It's the first year that two colors are introduced to define a color statement with Ivory making a comeback! Heather and Persimmon retire. Chocolate debuts in the fall. New shape "Square" is introduced. Fiesta® Christmas Tree Collection is introduced, ushering in a prolific period beginning of decal decorating.



- 2009 Lemongrass is introduced. Heather retires.  
The second item in the 75th Anniversary series is unveiled: a Large Oval Serving Platter.
- 2010 Homer Laughlin China purchases The Hall China Company, East Liverpool, Ohio, to expand its food service and Fiesta production.
- Homer Laughlin introduces a new collection: America's Diner/Bistro, based on its original checked and banded patterns produced in the mid-1900s.
- Paprika is introduced. Evergreen and Cinnabar retire.  
The third item in the 75th Anniversary series is introduced: 2PC Prep Baking Bowl Set.
- 2011 The official 75th Anniversary year! The dinnerware collection is available in limited edition anniversary color, Marigold, as well as limited edition Soup Tureen. Chocolate retires.
- 2012 Flamingo is introduced; Marigold retires.
- 2013 Lapis is the new color for 2013. Flamingo retires.  
Elizabeth McIlvain succeeds her brother, Joe Wells, III, as the new president of Homer Laughlin. After 50 years of service, Wells takes his father's place as chairman of the board.
- 2014 Poppy is introduced as the new color of 2014; Black and Peacock retire.  
New shape family "Bistro Collection" is introduced, including Dinner and Salad Plates.
- 2015 Two colors are introduced in the same year, in the same season: Sage and Slate. Plum retires.
- 2016 Fiesta celebrates its 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Homer Laughlin China Company celebrates its 145<sup>th</sup> year! New color Claret is introduced. Plum retires.
- 2017 Daffodil is introduced as the new color of 2017. Claret and Tangerine retire. Fiesta introduces the Floral Bouquet pattern - becomes #11<sup>th</sup> ranking bridal pattern consisting of a 9" Luncheon Plate and Java Mug.
- 2018 Fiesta first opens the 2nd exclusive showroom in the Atlanta AmericasMart Market building, Bldg. 2, 9<sup>th</sup> floor.



Mulberry is introduced as the 2018 new color, marking the 50<sup>th</sup> Fiesta color. Sage retires.

2019 Meadow is introduced as the new color of 2019.

2020 The Homer Laughlin China Company takes a bold step and returns to its roots, focusing solely on manufacturing dinnerware for the home. The foodservice divisions and brand names of The Homer Laughlin China Company (HLC) and the Hall China Company are acquired by Steelite International. The Homer Laughlin China Company is renamed and is henceforth known as The Fiesta® Tableware Company.

Butterscotch is introduced as the new color of 2020.  
The Dinner Bowl Plate is introduced.

2021 The Fiesta Tableware Company celebrates 150 Years of American Craftsmanship 1871-2021. Fiesta celebrates its 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, bringing to market the Pedestal Cake Plate in Twilight. Twilight is introduced as the new color of 2021; Cobalt and Shamrock retire. Luncheon Bowl Plate and Stackable Mugs are introduced.

2022 Peony launches as the new color of 2022.