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## MANUFACTURING



DEREK GEE PHOTOS, BUFFALO NEWS

The Corigliano family has lunch together in the executive office at the Rosina Food Products plant in West Seneca on Oct. 29. From left are Russell Corigliano II, Frank Corigliano Jr., Lauren Corigliano Muscarella, Russell A. Corigliano Sr., Andrea Corigliano Augustyn and Frank Corigliano.

# Rosina Food is building on a family tradition

Company's expansion of meatball-making facility is nearly complete

Rosina Food Products produces about 45 million pounds of finished product – mainly meatballs – each year at its protein plant in West Seneca.



MATT GLYNN

The company is preparing to nearly double the plant's output, through a \$47 million expansion that is nearly complete.

To support the surge in production, Rosina is hiring 150 additional

workers.

The company has invested in the latest technology to make meatballs efficiently, but still needs a capable workforce, said Russell Corigliano Sr., the president and CEO.

"Automation can take you so far, but you still need the human element," Corigliano said. "The human element is very good for decision-making. What we try to do is provide the tools to help you make timely decisions."

These are busy times for the family-owned business, under the second generation the Coriglianos' leadership. A third generation of family members is also actively involved.

## Rising production

The making of a meatball starts at one end of the Clinton Street plant, where raw meat is fed through a grinder. As the process continues, ingredients are added and the meat is given its shape, using ball formers. The meatballs are fully cooked in an oven, making them ready to eat.

Employees conduct quality checks along the way. "We're looking for color. We're looking for consistency – are they holding together?" said Tim Pitirri, the plant manager.

The meatballs are frozen, packaged and boxed up, ready for shipment. Most of what the plant produces is sold under the Rosina name, but the company



Brothers Frank Corigliano, executive vice president, and Russell Corigliano Sr., president and CEO, run the family-owned Rosina Food Products company.

also has private-label customers.

Expanding the protein facility will allow Rosina to meet rising demand, and to bring back to Western New York some production that has been handled elsewhere, due to capacity constraints.

## Humble beginnings

The manufacturing operations are on a scale far beyond the company's humble origins.

James Corigliano started Rosina in 1963 as a storefront sausage business in Buffalo, supplying meat markets, supermarkets and restaurants. He named it for his wife, Rose, whose name in Italian translates to Rosina.

Their sons, Russell and Frank, joined in growing the business in the mid 1970s. The brothers took over the day-to-day operations from their father in 1997 and are now the co-owners.

Rosina also has a pasta plant in West Seneca, and has made acquisitions over the years to bolster its operations and customer base. Its products are sold domestically and internationally.

## A hiring binge

With the protein plant's expansion nearly finished, Rosina

in early October announced a goal of hiring 150 additional workers over the course of 60 days. Nearly 400 people attended a one-day hiring event.

"We've been hearing a lot about how people are seeking out a family business because of the company culture, and they want to feel like they're a part of that," said Andrea Corigliano Augustyn, corporate brands manager. "Maybe they know about Rosina slightly, but when they find out more of the story, it's a big draw."

Rosina has hired about 50 additional workers so far, said Lauren Corigliano Muscarella, human resources administrator and associate engagement specialist.

Some of the new hires were referrals from existing employees. Others were looking for better pay or benefits than their current jobs offered, or a chance to work closer to where they live. When the hiring is complete, Rosina expects to have about 800 employees across all of its operations.

The expansion allows Rosina to remain on a growth curve.

"It says a lot about our people, and the support we get from our

people," said Frank Corigliano Sr., executive vice president. "It's like a big family. But it also says a lot about the quality of our product and the demand for it."

The company offers training for its employees through "Rosina University," in a building near the protein plant.

"It's not just walk in the door and start working – these are skilled jobs," Pitirri said. "These are technical jobs. This is something where you will be learning high-level skills, about high-end equipment, automation, all of that."

In addition to the orientation for new hires, employees can apply for leadership training at Rosina University.

"We try to create the most well-rounded, knowledgeable associate we can, so that they can make smart decisions and they can think for themselves, and take those skills – apply them here, apply them at home, wherever they need to – but they're leaving better than they came," Pitirri said.

## Family ties

As hectic as things might get at Rosina, the Corigliano family members try to gather for lunch



Freshly formed meatballs pour off of the production line and follow a conveyor belt into the oven to be baked at the Rosina Food Products plant in West Seneca.

each workday, at the company's headquarters near the protein plant.

Four children of Russell and Frank Corigliano work in the business. Their connections run deep.

"We've been coming in with our fathers since before we were teenagers," said Frank Corigliano Jr., business development lead for upstate New York and New England. "It just became part of our lives."

Russell Corigliano II's first job, at about age 7, was stocking the vending machines with his grandfather.

"He used to pay me a dollar a day – four quarters," he said. Corigliano II is now vice president of technical services, procurement and operations planning.

As the second and third generation of Coriglianos work alongside each other, they are building on a family tradition.

"Dad and Uncle Frank, they set big goals that are scary, that a lot of people wouldn't necessarily do in life," Augustyn said.

"Years ago, they would say, 'Someday, we're going to have a new meatball plant,'" she said. "This was, like, 20 years ago, and everything they said, they manifest. They set their goals for the company, it happens."

## Meet the Staff

The Buffalo Next team covers the forces reshaping the Buffalo Niagara economy.

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