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Kraft recalls chocolate on fears of salmonella

By Mike Hughlett

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Kraft Foods Inc. has recalled 288,000 packages of white chocolate baking squares on fears of salmonella contamination, the latest in a wave of U.S. food safety alerts and the third chocolate-related salmonella warning in the past year.

The Northfield-based food giant issued the recall late Wednesday for certain six-ounce packages of Baker's Premium White Chocolate Baking Squares.

The recall came after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration detected salmonella in some packages of Baker's Premium, Kraft said. Salmonella is a bacterium that can cause fever, diarrhea, and abdominal cramps, and can create life-threatening infections in people with weakened immune systems.

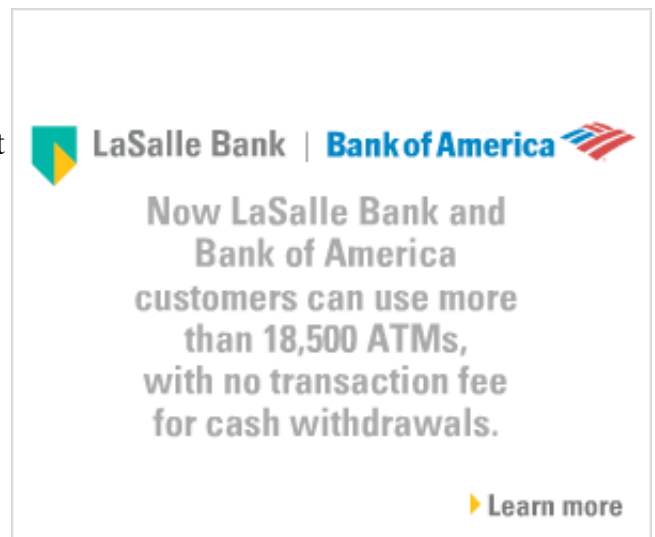
Kraft has had no reports of consumers getting ill from the affected baking squares, said Cathy Pernu, a Kraft spokeswoman.



Pernu said the squares were made in St. Hyacinthe, Quebec, in a factory operated by Switzerland-based Barry Callebaut AG, the world's largest chocolate-maker. Callebaut officials could not be reached for comment.

The recall affects 24,000 cases of baking squares shipped from the St. Hyacinthe plant, Pernu said, and each case contains 12 six-ounce packages. The recall affects packages with a UPC code of 0043000252200 and have the following best-when-used-by dates: 31 March 2008 XCZ; 01 April 2008 XCZ; 02 April 2008 XCZ; and 03 April 2008 XCZ.

Foods contaminated with salmonella usually look and smell normal, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Web site.

Last year, candy giant Cadbury Ltd. recalled about one million chocolate bars in Great Britain because of a salmonella outbreak, which was traced to a candy factory where wastewater was leaking from a pipe. The



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company was fined about \$2 million this summer and spent about \$41 million to avoid a repeat of the problem.

Also last year, Hershey Canada, a branch of the U.S. chocolate-maker, announced a major recall in Canada and shut down its Smith Falls, Ontario, plant for three weeks after a salmonella scare. No illnesses were reported.

In the United States, peanut butter and vegetable products have both been sources of salmonella scares earlier this year.

A leaky roof and faulty sprinkler system at a Georgia factory caused salmonella to bloom in Peter Pan peanut butter. More than 400 people were sickened nationwide and Peter Pan's maker, ConAgra Foods, announced a huge recall in February.

In June, Veggie Booty, a popular snack food, was recalled after 61 people in 19 states were sickened. The culprit: a salmonella strain in the product's seasoning.

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