

1 Kevin Laukaitis*
2 Jonathan Shub (SBN 237708)
3 **SHUB LAW FIRM LLC**
4 134 Kings Highway E, 2nd Floor
5 Haddonfield, NJ 08033
6 T: 856-772-7200
7 F: 856-210-9088
8 klaukaitis@shublawyers.com
9 jshub@shublawyers.com

10 *Attorneys for Plaintiff and the Class*

11 [Additional counsel listed on signature page]

12 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**
13 **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

14 JEANNE MATTHEWS, individually and
15 on behalf of all others similarly situated,

16 Plaintiff,

17 v.

18 MORTON & BASSETT SPICES,

19 Defendant.

Case No.:

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

1
2 Plaintiff, Jeanne Matthews (“**Plaintiff**”), on behalf of herself and all others
3 similarly situated, brings this class action against Defendant, Morton & Bassett
4 Spices, (“**Defendant**” or “**Morton & Bassett**”), and alleges on personal
5 knowledge, investigation of her counsel, and on information and belief as follows:
6

INTRODUCTION

7
8
9 1. This is a consumer class action brought individually by Plaintiff and
10 on behalf of all persons in the below-defined proposed Classes, all of whom
11 purchased one or more spices manufactured by Defendant.¹
12

13 2. Defendant is one of the premier manufacturers and distributors of
14 spices and seasonings in the United States.
15

16 3. Since 1986, Defendant has offered a diverse range of spices and
17 seasonings.
18

19 4. Defendant touts itself as a company that cares for the quality of its
20 products and the well-being of its customers. Through representations on the
21 website, Defendant guarantees “Our top priority has always been food safety” and
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26 ¹ The purchased products include, but are not limited to Morton & Bassett-branded: basil, ground
27 ginger, ground thyme, and ground turmeric (the “Spices.”). Plaintiff reserves to right to amend the
28 Complaint to include/revise the list of products subject to this Complaint.

1 details the steps it takes to “ensure product cleanliness and safety for our
2 customers.”²

3 5. Unbeknown to Plaintiff and members of the proposed Classes, and
4 contrary to the representations on the Spices’ label, the Products contain heavy
5 metals, including arsenic, cadmium, and lead at levels above what is considered
6 safe for children and adults, which, if disclosed to Plaintiff and members of the
7 proposed Classes prior to purchase, would have caused Plaintiff and members of
8 the proposed Classes not to purchase or consume the Spices.
9

10
11 6. Tellingly, Defendant does not list heavy metals as an ingredient on
12 the Spices’ label nor does it warn of the potential presence of heavy metals in its
13 Spices.
14

15 7. As a result, the Spices’ labeling is deceptive and misleading.
16

17 8. Plaintiff and the members of the proposed Classes, as defined below,
18 thus bring claims for consumer fraud and seek damages, injunctive and declaratory
19 relief, interest, costs, and attorneys’ fees.
20

21 **THE PARTIES**

22 9. Plaintiff is a resident and citizen of the State of Illinois, residing in
23 Evanston, Illinois and is a member of the proposed Classes defined herein. She
24 purchased various Spices in Illinois during the applicable statutory period.
25

26
27 ² <https://mortonbassett.com/pages/about-morton-bassett> (last accessed Jan. 21, 2022).
28

1 10. Defendant Morton & Bassett Spices is a California corporation, with
2 its principal place of business at 1400 Valley House Drive, Suite 100
3 Rohnert Park, CA 94928. As such, Defendant is a resident and citizen of California.
4

5 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

6 11. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant in this matter.
7 The acts and omissions giving rise to this action occurred in the state of California.
8 Defendant has been afforded due process because it has, at all times relevant to this
9 matter, individually or through its agents, subsidiaries, officers and/or
10 representatives, operated, conducted, engaged in and carried on a business venture
11 in this state and/or maintained an office or agency in this state, and/or marketed,
12 advertised, distributed and/or sold products, committed a statutory violation within
13 this state related to the allegations made herein, and caused injuries to Plaintiff and
14 putative Class Members, which arose out of the acts and omissions that occurred
15 in the state of California, during the relevant time period, at which time Defendant
16 were engaged in business activities in the state of California.
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21 12. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to
22 28 U.S.C. § 1332 of the Class Action Fairness Act of 2005 because: (i) there are
23 100 or more putative Class Members, (ii) the aggregate amount in controversy
24 exceeds \$5,000,000, exclusive of interest and costs, and (iii) there is minimal
25 diversity because at least one Plaintiff and Defendant are citizens of different
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1 states. This Court has supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiff’s state law claims
2 pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367.

3 13. Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(a), venue is proper because a substantial
4 part of the events giving rise to the claims asserted occurred in this District. Venue
5 is also proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(c) because Defendant conducts
6 substantial business in this District, is headquartered in this District, has sufficient
7 minimum contacts with this District, and otherwise purposely avails itself of the
8 markets in this District, through the promotion, sale, and marketing of the Products
9 in this District.
10
11

12
13 **FACTS COMMON TO ALL CLASS MEMBERS**

14 14. Defendant manufactures, distributes, promotes, offers for sale, and
15 sells the Spices, both in the past and currently. Defendant has advertised and
16 continues to advertise the Products through television commercials, print
17 advertisements, point-of-sale displays, product packaging, Internet advertisements,
18 and other promotional materials.
19
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21 15. An investigation by known consumer-advocacy group Consumer
22 Reports revealed that Spices manufactured by Defendant contain “potentially
23 dangerous heavy metals:”³
24

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26
27 ³ <https://www.consumerreports.org/food-safety/your-herbs-and-spices-might-contain-arsenic-cadmium-and-lead/#tests> (last accessed January 21, 2022)

1 “Roughly one-third of the tested products, 40 in total, had
2 high enough levels of arsenic, lead, and cadmium
3 combined, on average, to pose a health concern for
4 children when regularly consumed in typical serving sizes.
5 Most raised concern for adults, too.”⁴

6 16. Exposure to heavy metals causes permanent decreases in IQ,
7 diminished future economic productivity, and increased risk of future criminal and
8 antisocial behavior in children. Toxic heavy metals endanger infant neurological
9 development and long-term brain function. Lead and arsenic are heavy metals
10 known to cause a wide spectrum of adverse outcomes in pregnancy such as
11 abortions, retarded growth at the intrauterine cavity, skeletal deformities,
12 malformations and retarded development especially of the nervous system.⁵

13 17. Young children are particularly vulnerable to lead because the
14 physical and behavioral effects of lead occur at lower exposure levels in children
15 than in adults. A dose of lead that would have little effect on an adult can have a
16 significant effect on a child. In children, low levels of exposure have been linked
17 to damage to the central and peripheral nervous system, learning disabilities,
18 shorter stature, impaired hearing, and impaired formation and function of blood
19 cells.⁶

24
25
26 ⁴ *Id.*

27 ⁵ *Id.*

28 ⁶ See <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/pregnant.htm>.

1 18. EPA has set the maximum contaminant level goal for lead in drinking
2 water at zero because lead is a toxic metal that can be harmful to human health
3 even at low exposure levels. Lead is persistent, and it can bioaccumulate in the
4 body over time.⁷

6 19. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry states that
7 there may be no threshold for lead with regards to developmental impact on
8 children. “In other words there are no safe limits for [lead].⁸

10 **FED. R. CIV. P. 9(b) ALLEGATIONS**

11 20. Rule 9(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure provided that “[i]n
12 alleging fraud or mistake, a party must state with particularity the circumstances
13 constituting fraud or mistake.” To the extent necessary, as detailed in the
14 paragraphs above and below, Plaintiff has satisfied the requirements of Rule 9(b)
15 by establishing the following elements with sufficient particularity.
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18 21. **WHO:** Defendant made material misrepresentations and/or
19 omissions of fact in its labeling and marketing of the Spices by misrepresenting
20 those Spices’ composition and/or omitting the presence of heavy metals.
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25 ⁷ See [https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-](https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water)
26 [drinking-water](https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water).

27 ⁸ G. Schwalfenberg, I. Rodushkinb, S.J. Genuis, “Heavy metal contamination of prenatal
28 vitamins,” *Toxicology Reports* 5 at 392 (2018).

1 22. **WHAT:** Defendant’s conduct here was and continues to be fraudulent
2 because it has the effect of deceiving consumers into believing that the Spices do
3 not contain heavy metals. Defendant omitted from Plaintiff and Class Members
4 that the Spices contain heavy metals. Defendant knew or should have known this
5 information is material to all reasonable consumers and impacts consumers’
6 purchasing decisions. Yet, Defendant has and continues to represent that the Spices
7 are of a composition not containing heavy metals when they do contain heavy
8 metals, and has omitted from the Spices’ labeling the fact that they contain heavy
9 metals, and has omitted from the Spices’ labeling the fact that they contain heavy
10 metals, and has omitted from the Spices’ labeling the fact that they contain heavy
11 metals.

12 23. **WHEN:** Defendant made material misrepresentations and/or
13 omissions detailed herein, including that the Spices do not contain heavy metals,
14 continuously throughout the applicable Class period(s).

15 24. **WHERE:** Defendant’s material misrepresentations and omissions,
16 that the Spices do not contain heavy metals, were made on the front labeling and
17 packaging of the Products and throughout Defendant’s advertising. Defendant’s
18 representations and omissions were viewed by every purchaser, including Plaintiff,
19 at the point of sale in every transaction. The Spices are sold worldwide in brick-
20 and-mortar stores and online store nationwide.

21 25. **HOW:** Defendant omitted from the Spices’ labeling the fact that they
22 contain heavy metals. And as discussed in detail throughout this Complaint,
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1 Plaintiff and Class Members read and relied on Defendant's front-label
2 representations and omissions before purchasing the Spices.

3 26. **WHY:** Defendant misrepresented its Spices are not containing heavy
4 metals and omitted from the Spices' labeling the fact that they do contain heavy
5 metals for the express purpose of inducing Plaintiff and Class Members to purchase
6 the Spices at a substantial price premium. As such, Defendant profited by selling
7 the misrepresented Spices to at least thousands of consumers throughout the nation.
8
9

10 **CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS**

11 27. Plaintiff brings this action individually and on behalf of all other
12 persons similarly situated pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23. The class
13 definition(s) may depend on the information obtained throughout discovery.
14 Notwithstanding, at this time, Plaintiff brings this action and seeks certification of
15 the following proposed Classes:
16
17

18 **National Class:** All persons within the United States
19 who purchased and consumed the Spices from the
20 beginning of any applicable limitations period through
21 the date of class certification.

22 Plaintiff also brings this action on behalf of the following State
23 Sub-Class:

24 **Illinois Sub-Class:** All persons in the State of Illinois
25 who purchased and consumed the Spices from the
26 beginning of any applicable limitations period through
27 the date of class certification.

1 28. Excluded from the proposed Classes are the Defendant, and any
2 entities in which the Defendant has controlling interest, the Defendant's agents,
3 employees and its legal representatives, any Judge to whom this action is assigned
4 and any member of such Judge's staff and immediate family, and Plaintiff's
5 counsel, their staff members, and their immediate family.
6

7 29. Plaintiff reserves the right to amend the definition of the Classes if
8 discovery or further investigation reveals that the Classes should be expanded or
9 otherwise modified.
10

11 30. Certification of Plaintiff's claims for class-wide treatment is
12 appropriate because Plaintiff can prove the elements of her claims on a class-wide
13 basis using the same evidence as would be used to prove those elements in
14 individual actions alleging the same claims.
15
16

17 31. **Numerosity – Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(a)(1).** Class
18 Members are so numerous and geographically dispersed that joinder of all Class
19 Members is impracticable. While the exact number of Class Members remains
20 unknown at this time, upon information and belief, there are thousands, if not
21 hundreds of thousands, of putative Class Members. Moreover, the number of
22 members of the Classes may be ascertained from Defendant's books and records.
23 Class Members may be notified of the pendency of this action by mail and/or
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1 electronic mail, which can be supplemented if deemed necessary or appropriate by
2 the Court with published notice.

3 **32. Predominance of Common Questions of Law and Fact – Federal**
4 **Rule of Civil Procedure 23(a)(2) and 23(b)(3).** Common questions of law and
5 fact exist as to all Class Members and predominate over any questions affecting
6 only individual Class Members. These common legal and factual questions
7 include, but are limited to, the following:
8
9

- 10 a. Whether the Spices contain dangerous levels of heavy metals;
- 11 b. Whether the marketing, advertising, packaging, labeling, and other
12 promotional materials for the Spices are deceptive;
- 13 c. Whether Defendant’s actions violate the state consumer fraud statutes
14 invoked below;
- 15 d. Whether Defendant’s actions constitute common law fraud;
- 16 e. Whether Plaintiff and Members of the Classes were damaged by
17 Defendant’s conduct;
- 18 f. Whether Defendant was unjustly enriched at the expense of Plaintiff
19 and Class Members; and
- 20 g. Whether Plaintiff and Class Members are entitled to injunctive relief.
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25 **33. Typicality – Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(a)(3).** The claims
26 of the named Plaintiff are typical of the claims of other Members of the Classes.
27

1 All Members of the Classes were comparably injured by Defendant's conduct
2 described above, and there are no defenses available to Defendant that are unique
3 to Plaintiff or any particular members of the Classes.
4

5 **34. Adequacy – Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(a)(4).** Plaintiff will
6 fairly and adequately represent and protect the interests of the members of the
7 putative Classes. Plaintiff has retained counsel with substantial experience in
8 handling complex class action litigation, including complex questions that arise in
9 this type of consumer protection litigation. Further, Plaintiff and her counsel are
10 committed to the vigorous prosecution of this action. Plaintiff does not have any
11 conflicts of interest or interests adverse to those of putative Classes.
12

13 **35. Insufficiency of Separate Actions – Federal Rule of Civil**
14 **Procedure 23(b)(1).** Absent a class action, Plaintiff and members of the Classes will
15 continue to suffer the harm described herein, for which they would have no remedy.
16 Even if separate actions could be brought by individual consumers, the resulting
17 multiplicity of lawsuits would cause undue burden and expense for both the Court
18 and the litigants, as well as create a risk of inconsistent rulings and adjudications that
19 might be dispositive of the interests of similarly situated consumers, substantially
20 impeding their ability to protect their interests, while establishing incompatible
21 standards of conduct for Defendant. Accordingly, the proposed Classes satisfy the
22 requirements of Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(b)(1).
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1 **36. Declaratory and Injunctive Relief – Federal Rule of Civil**
2 **Procedure 23(b)(2).** Defendant has acted or refused to act on grounds generally
3 applicable to Plaintiff and the other Members of the Classes, thereby making
4 appropriate final injunctive relief and declaratory relief, as described below, with
5 respect to the Members of the Classes as a whole. In particular, Plaintiff seeks to
6 certify the Classes to enjoin Defendant from selling or otherwise distributing spices
7 until such time that Defendant can demonstrate to the Court’s satisfaction that their
8 spices are accurately labeled.
9

10
11 **37. Superiority – Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(b)(3).** A class
12 action is superior to any other available methods for the fair and efficient
13 adjudication of the present controversy for at least the following reasons:
14

- 15 a. The damages suffered by each individual members of the putative
16 Classes do not justify the burden and expense of individual
17 prosecution of the complex and extensive litigation necessitated by
18 Defendant’s conduct;
19
20 b. Even if individual members of the Classes had the resources to pursue
21 individual litigation, it would be unduly burdensome to the courts in
22 which the individual litigation would proceed;
23
24 c. The claims presented in this case predominate over any questions of
25 law or fact affecting individual members of the Classes;
26
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28

1 d. Individual joinder of all members of the Classes is impracticable;

2 e. Absent a Class, Plaintiff and members of the putative Classes will
3 continue to suffer harm as a result of Defendant's unlawful conduct;
4 and
5

6 f. This action presents no difficulty that would impede its management
7 by the Court as a class action, which is the best available means by
8 which Plaintiff and members of the putative Classes can seek redress
9 for the harm caused by Defendant.
10

11 g. In the alternative, the Classes may be certified for the following
12 reasons:
13

14 i. The prosecution of separate actions by individual members of the
15 Classes would create a risk of inconsistent or varying
16 adjudication with respect to individual members of the Classes,
17 which would establish incompatible standards of conduct for
18 Defendant;
19

20 ii. Adjudications of claims of the individual members of the Classes
21 against Defendant would, as a practical matter, be dispositive of
22 the interests of other members of the putative Classes who are
23 not parties to the adjudication and may substantially impair or
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1 impede the ability of other putative Class Members to protect
2 their interests; and

3 iii. Defendant has acted or refused to act on grounds generally
4 applicable to the members of the putative Classes, thereby
5 making appropriate final and injunctive relief with respect to the
6 putative Classes as a whole.
7

8
9 **CAUSES OF ACTION**

10 **COUNT I**

11 **Violation of the Illinois Consumer Fraud Act, 815 ILCS 505/1, et seq.**
12 **(On Behalf of the Illinois Subclass)**

13 38. Plaintiff repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained in all
14 the foregoing paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

15
16 39. The Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act (the
17 “ICFA”), 815 ILCS 505/1, et seq., prohibits the use of unfair or deceptive business
18 practices in the conduct of trade or commerce. The ICFA is to be liberally construed
19 to effectuate its purpose.
20

21 40. Plaintiff and other members of the Illinois Sub-Cass, as purchasers of
22 the Spices, are consumers within the meaning of the ICFA given that Defendant’s
23 business activities involve trade or commerce, are addressed to the market generally
24 and otherwise implicate consumer protection concerns.
25
26

1 41. Defendant's conduct in misrepresenting the benefits of its Spices
2 constitute the act, use and employment of deception, fraud, false pretenses, false
3 promises, misrepresentation, and unfair practices in the conduct of Defendant's trade
4 or commerce.
5

6 42. Defendant also knowingly concealed, suppressed, and consciously
7 omitted material facts to Plaintiff and other members of the Illinois Sub-Class
8 knowing that consumers would rely on the advertisements and packaging and
9 Defendant's uniform representations to purchase the Spices.
10

11 43. Plaintiff and the other Illinois Sub-Class Members reasonably relied
12 upon Defendant's representation that the Spices was safe for personal use and, due
13 to Defendant's omission, Plaintiffs relied on Defendant's labeling to conclude that
14 the Product was not contaminated with any dangerous substance, including heavy
15 metals.
16
17

18 44. Defendant's conduct, as described herein, took place within the State
19 of Illinois and constitute unfair or deceptive acts or practices in the course of trade
20 and commerce, in violation of 815 ICFA 505/1, et seq.
21

22 45. Defendant violated the ICFA by representing that the Spices has
23 characteristics or benefits that it does not have. 815 ILCS § 505/2; 815 ILCS §
24 510/2(7).
25
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1 46. Defendant advertised the Spices with intent not to sell it as advertised,
2 in violation of 815 ILCS § 505/2 and 815 ILCS § 510/2(9).

3 47. Defendant engaged in fraudulent and/or deceptive conduct which
4 creates a likelihood of confusion or of misunderstanding in violation of 815 ILCS §
5 505/2; 815 ILCS § 510/2(3).

7 48. Defendant engaged in misleading and deceptive advertising that
8 represented that the Spices were safe. Defendant chose to label the Spices in this
9 way to impact consumer choices and gain market dominance, as it is aware that all
10 consumers who purchased the Spices were exposed to and would be impacted by its
11 omission and would reasonably believe that the Spices was safe for personal use and
12 did not contain any dangerous contaminants, including heavy metals. However, the
13 Product is not safe, as it is contaminated with heavy metals.

14 49. Defendant intended that Plaintiff and each of the other Illinois Sub-
15 Class Members would reasonably rely upon the misrepresentations, misleading
16 characterizations, warranties and material omissions concerning the true nature of
17 the Spices.

18 50. Defendant's misrepresentations, concealment, omissions, and other
19 deceptive conduct were likely to deceive and cause misunderstanding and/or in fact
20 caused Plaintiff and each of the other Illinois Sub-Class Members to be deceived
21 about the true nature of the Spices.

1 51. Plaintiff and Class Members have been damaged as a proximate result
2 of Defendant's violations of the ICFA and have suffered damages as a direct and
3 proximate result of purchasing the Spices.
4

5 52. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's violations of the ICFA,
6 as set forth above, Plaintiff and the Illinois Sub-Class Members have suffered
7 ascertainable loss of money caused by Defendant's misrepresentations.
8

9 53. Had they been aware of the true nature of the Spices, Plaintiff and Class
10 Members either would have paid less for the Product or would not have purchased
11 it at all.
12

13 54. Plaintiff and the Illinois Sub-Class Members are therefore entitled to
14 relief, including restitution, actual damages, treble damages, punitive damages, costs
15 and attorney's fees, under sections 815 ILCS 505/10a of the ICFA. Plaintiff and
16 Class Members are also entitled to injunctive relief, seeking an order enjoining
17 Defendant's unfair and/or deceptive acts or practices.
18

19 **COUNT II**
20 **Fraud**
21 **(On Behalf of the Nationwide and/or**
22 **Illinois Sub-Class)**

23 55. Plaintiff, individually and on behalf of the National Class, repeats and
24 re-alleges all previously alleged paragraphs, as if fully alleged herein.
25

26 56. Rule 9(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure provides that "[i]n
27 alleging fraud or mistake, a party must state with particularity the circumstances
28

1 constituting fraud or mistake.” To the extent necessary, as detailed in the paragraphs
2 above and below, Plaintiff has satisfied the requirements of Rule 9(b) by establishing
3 the following elements with sufficient particularity:
4

5 a. **WHO:** Defendant made material misrepresentations and/or omissions
6 of fact in its labeling and marketing of the Spices by misrepresenting
7 those Spices’ composition and/or omitting the presence of heavy
8 metals.
9

10 b. **WHAT:** Defendant’s conduct here was and continues to be fraudulent
11 because it has the effect of deceiving consumers into believing that
12 the Spices do not contain heavy metals. Defendant omitted from
13 Plaintiff and Class Members that the Spices contain heavy metals.
14 Defendant knew or should have known this information is material to
15 all reasonable consumers and impacts consumers’ purchasing
16 decisions. Yet, Defendant has and continues to represent that the
17 Spices are of a composition not containing heavy metals when they
18 do contain heavy metals, and has omitted from the Spices’ labeling
19 the fact that they contain heavy metals.
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23 c. **WHEN:** Defendant made material misrepresentations and/or
24 omissions detailed herein, including that the Spices do not contain
25 heavy metals, continuously throughout the applicable Class period(s).
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1 d. **WHERE:** Defendant's material misrepresentations and omissions,
2 that the Spices do not contain heavy metals, were made on the front
3 labeling and packaging of the Products and throughout Defendant's
4 advertising. Defendant's representations and omissions were viewed
5 by every purchaser, including Plaintiff, at the point of sale in every
6 transaction. The Spices are sold worldwide in brick-and-mortar stores
7 and online store nationwide.
8

9
10 e. **HOW:** Defendant omitted from the Spices' labeling the fact that they
11 contain heavy metals. And as discussed in detail throughout this
12 Complaint, Plaintiff and Class Members read and relied on
13 Defendant's front-label representations and omissions before
14 purchasing the Spices.
15

16
17 f. **WHY:** Defendant misrepresented its Spices are not containing heavy
18 metals and omitted from the Spices' labeling the fact that they do
19 contain heavy metals for the express purpose of inducing Plaintiff and
20 Class Members to purchase the Spices at a substantial price premium.
21 As such, Defendant profited by selling the misrepresented Spices to
22 at least thousands of consumers throughout the nation.
23
24

25 57. As alleged herein, Defendant made these material representations and
26 omissions in order to induce Plaintiff and Class Members to purchase the Spices.
27

1 58. As alleged in detail herein, Defendant knew the misrepresentations and
2 omissions regarding the Spices were false and misleading but nevertheless made
3 such representations and omissions through the marketing, advertising and on the
4 Spices' labeling. In reliance on these representations and omissions, Plaintiff and
5 Class Members were induced to, and did, pay monies to purchase the Spices.
6

7 59. Had Plaintiff and the Class known the truth about the Spices, they
8 would not have purchased the Spices.
9

10 60. As a proximate result of the fraudulent conduct of Defendant, Plaintiff
11 and Class Members paid monies to Defendant, through its regular retail sales
12 channels, to which Defendant is not entitled, and have been damaged in an amount
13 to be proven at trial.
14

15
16 **COUNT III**
17 **Unjust Enrichment**
18 **(On Behalf of the Nationwide and/or**
19 **Illinois Sub-Class)**

20 61. Plaintiff, individually and on behalf of the National Class, repeats and
21 realleges all previously alleged paragraphs, as if fully alleged herein.

22 62. Plaintiff and the putative Class Members conferred a benefit on
23 Defendant when they purchased the Spices, of which Defendant had knowledge. By
24 its wrongful acts and omissions described herein, including selling the Spices, which
25 contain heavy metals, including arsenic, cadmium, and lead at levels above what is
26

1 considered safe for children and adults, Defendant was unjustly enriched at the
2 expense of Plaintiff and the putative Class Members. Plaintiff's detriment and
3 Defendant's enrichment were related to and flowed from the wrongful conduct
4 challenged in this Complaint.
5

6 63. Defendant has profited from its unlawful, unfair, misleading, and
7 deceptive practices at the expense of Plaintiff and the putative Class Members under
8 circumstances in which it would be unjust for Defendant to be permitted to retain
9 the benefit. It would be inequitable for Defendant to retain the profits, benefits, and
10 other compensation obtained from their wrongful conduct as described herein in
11 connection with selling the Spices.
12

13 64. Defendant has been unjustly enriched in retaining the revenues derived
14 from the proposed Class Members' purchases of the Spices, which retention of such
15 revenues under these circumstances is unjust and inequitable because Defendant
16 manufactured defective Spices, and misrepresented the nature of the Spices,
17 misrepresented their composition, and knowingly marketed and promoted dangerous
18 and defective Spices, which caused injuries to Plaintiff and Members of the proposed
19 Class because they would not have purchased the Spices based on the same
20 representations if the true facts concerning the Spices had been known.
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25 65. Plaintiff and the putative Class Members have been damaged as a direct
26 and proximate result of Defendant's unjust enrichment because they would not have
27

1 purchased the Spices on the same terms or for the same price had they known the
2 true nature of the Spices and the misstatements regarding what the Spices were and
3 what they contained.

4
5 66. Plaintiff and the putative Class Members are entitled to recover from
6 Defendant all amounts wrongfully collected and improperly retained by Defendant.

7
8 67. When required, Plaintiff and the putative Class Members are in privity
9 with Defendant because Defendant's sale of the Spices was either direct or through
10 authorized sellers. Purchasing through authorized sellers is sufficient to create such
11 privity because such authorized sellers are Defendant's agents for the purpose of the
12 sale of the Spices.

13
14 68. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's wrongful conduct and
15 unjust enrichment, Plaintiff and the putative Class Members are entitled to restitution
16 of, disgorgement of, and/or imposition of a constructive trust upon all profits,
17 benefits, and other compensation obtained by Defendant for its inequitable and
18 unlawful conduct.
19
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21 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

22 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, individually and on behalf of all others similarly
23 situated members of the Classes, pray for relief and judgment, including entry of
24 an order:
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- 1 A. Declaring that this action is properly maintained as a class action,
2 certifying the proposed Class(es), appointing Plaintiff as Class
3 Representative and appointing Plaintiff's counsel as Class Counsel;
4
- 5 B. Directing that Defendant bear the costs of any notice sent to the
6 Class(es);
7
- 8 C. Declaring that Defendant must disgorge, for the benefit of the
9 Class(es), all or part of the ill-gotten profits they received from the
10 sale of the Products, or order Defendant to make full restitution to
11 Plaintiff and the members of the Class(es);
12
- 13 D. Awarding restitution and other appropriate equitable relief;
14
- 15 E. Granting an injunction against Defendant to enjoin it from
16 conducting its business through the unlawful, unfair and fraudulent
17 acts or practices set forth herein;
18
- 19 F. Granting an Order requiring Defendant to fully and appropriately
20 recall the Spices, to remove the claims on its website and elsewhere,
21 including the material representations and/or omissions that the
22 Spices do not contain heavy metals;
23
- 24 G. Ordering a jury trial and damages according to proof;
25
26
27
28

- 1 H. Awarding Plaintiff and members of the Class(es) statutory damages,
2 as provided by the applicable state consumer protection statutes
3 invoked above;
4
5 I. Enjoining Defendant from continuing to engage in the unlawful and
6 unfair business acts and practices as alleged herein;
7
8 J. Awarding attorneys' fees and litigation costs to Plaintiff and
9 members of the Class(es);
10
11 K. Awarding civil penalties, prejudgment interest and punitive damages
12 as permitted by law; and
13
14 L. Ordering such other and further relief as the Court deems just and
15 proper.

16 **JURY DEMAND**

17 Plaintiff demands a trial by jury of all claims in this Complaint so triable.
18

19 Dated: January 25, 2022

20 Respectfully submitted,

21 /s/ Jonathan Shub

22 Jonathan Shub (SBN 237708)

23 Kevin Laukaitis*

24 **SHUB LAW FIRM LLC**

25 134 Kings Highway E, 2nd Floor

26 Haddonfield, NJ 08033

27 T: 856-772-7200

28 F: 856-210-9088

jshub@shublawyers.com

1 klaukaitis@shublawyers.com

2 Gary E. Mason*
3 **MASON LIETZ & KLINGER, LLP**
4 5101 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Suite 305
5 Washington, DC 20016
6 Tel: 202-640-1168
7 Fax: 202-429-2294
8 gmason@masonllp.com

9 Gary M. Klinger*
10 **MASON LIETZ & KLINGER, LLP**
11 227 W. Monroe Street, Suite 2100
12 Chicago, Illinois 60606
13 Tel: 202-640-1168
14 Fax: 202-429-2294
15 gklinger@masonllp.com

16 **Pro Hac Vice* Application Forthcoming

17 *Attorneys for Plaintiff and Putative Class*
18 *Members*

1 **CLRA Venue Declaration Pursuant to California Civil Code Section 1780(d)**

2 I, Jonathan Shub, declare as follows:

3
4 1. I am an attorney at law licensed to practice in the State of California
5 and a member of the bar of this Court. I am an attorney at Shub Law Firm LLC,
6 counsel of record for Plaintiff in this action. I have personal knowledge of the facts
7 set forth in this declaration and, if call as a witness, I could and would competently
8 testify thereto under oath.
9

10
11 2. The Complaint filed in this action is filed in the proper place for trial
12 under Civil Code Section 1780(d) in that a substantial portion of the events alleged
13 in the Complaint occurred in the Northern District of California.
14

15 I declare under the penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California
16 and the United States that the foregoing is true and correct and that this declaration
17 was executed at Haddonfield, New Jersey this 25th day of January, 2022.
18

19 /s/ Jonathan Shub
20 Jonathan Shub
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CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS-CAND 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved in its original form by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the Clerk of Court to initiate the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS

Jeanne Matthews, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated

(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Cook County, IL (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)

(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)

Jonathan Shub, Shub Law Firm LLC 134 Kings Hwy E, Fl-2, Haddonfield, NJ 08033 856-772-7200

DEFENDANTS

Morton & Bassett LLC

County of Residence of First Listed Defendant Sonoma County (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)

NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.

Attorneys (If Known)

II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party) 2 U.S. Government Defendant 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)

III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)

- Citizen of This State PTF 1 DEF 1 Incorporated or Principal Place of Business In This State PTF 4 DEF 4 Citizen of Another State PTF 2 DEF 2 Incorporated and Principal Place of Business In Another State PTF 5 DEF 5 Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country PTF 3 DEF 3 Foreign Nation PTF 6 DEF 6

IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

Table with columns: CONTRACT, REAL PROPERTY, TORTS, CIVIL RIGHTS, PRISONER PETITIONS, HABEAS CORPUS, OTHER, FORFEITURE/PENALTY, LABOR, IMMIGRATION, BANKRUPTCY, SOCIAL SECURITY, FEDERAL TAX SUITS, OTHER STATUTES.

V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- 1 Original Proceeding 2 Removed from State Court 3 Remanded from Appellate Court 4 Reinstated or Reopened 5 Transferred from Another District (specify) 6 Multidistrict Litigation-Transfer 8 Multidistrict Litigation-Direct File

VI. CAUSE OF ACTION

Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity): 28 USC 1332 (d)

Brief description of cause: Consumer Class Action Misrepresentation of spices

VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:

CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER RULE 23, Fed. R. Civ. P. DEMAND \$ 5,000,000.00

CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint: JURY DEMAND: X Yes No

VIII. RELATED CASE(S), IF ANY (See instructions):

JUDGE DOCKET NUMBER

IX. DIVISIONAL ASSIGNMENT (Civil Local Rule 3-2)

(Place an "X" in One Box Only) X SAN FRANCISCO/OAKLAND SAN JOSE EUREKA-MCKINLEYVILLE

DATE 01/25/2022

SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD

/s/ Jonathan Shub

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTORNEYS COMPLETING CIVIL COVER SHEET FORM JS-CAND 44

Authority For Civil Cover Sheet. The JS-CAND 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replaces nor supplements the filings and service of pleading or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved in its original form by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the Clerk of Court to initiate the civil docket sheet. Consequently, a civil cover sheet is submitted to the Clerk of Court for each civil complaint filed. The attorney filing a case should complete the form as follows:

- I. a) Plaintiffs-Defendants.** Enter names (last, first, middle initial) of plaintiff and defendant. If the plaintiff or defendant is a government agency, use only the full name or standard abbreviations. If the plaintiff or defendant is an official within a government agency, identify first the agency and then the official, giving both name and title.
- b) County of Residence.** For each civil case filed, except U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county where the first listed plaintiff resides at the time of filing. In U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county in which the first listed defendant resides at the time of filing. (NOTE: In land condemnation cases, the county of residence of the “defendant” is the location of the tract of land involved.)
- c) Attorneys.** Enter the firm name, address, telephone number, and attorney of record. If there are several attorneys, list them on an attachment, noting in this section “(see attachment).”
- II. Jurisdiction.** The basis of jurisdiction is set forth under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a), which requires that jurisdictions be shown in pleadings. Place an “X” in one of the boxes. If there is more than one basis of jurisdiction, precedence is given in the order shown below.
- (1) United States plaintiff. Jurisdiction based on 28 USC §§ 1345 and 1348. Suits by agencies and officers of the United States are included here.
 - (2) United States defendant. When the plaintiff is suing the United States, its officers or agencies, place an “X” in this box.
 - (3) Federal question. This refers to suits under 28 USC § 1331, where jurisdiction arises under the Constitution of the United States, an amendment to the Constitution, an act of Congress or a treaty of the United States. In cases where the U.S. is a party, the U.S. plaintiff or defendant code takes precedence, and box 1 or 2 should be marked.
 - (4) Diversity of citizenship. This refers to suits under 28 USC § 1332, where parties are citizens of different states. When Box 4 is checked, the citizenship of the different parties must be checked. (See Section III below; **NOTE: federal question actions take precedence over diversity cases.**)
- III. Residence (citizenship) of Principal Parties.** This section of the JS-CAND 44 is to be completed if diversity of citizenship was indicated above. Mark this section for each principal party.
- IV. Nature of Suit.** Place an “X” in the appropriate box. If the nature of suit cannot be determined, be sure the cause of action, in Section VI below, is sufficient to enable the deputy clerk or the statistical clerk(s) in the Administrative Office to determine the nature of suit. If the cause fits more than one nature of suit, select the most definitive.
- V. Origin.** Place an “X” in one of the six boxes.
- (1) Original Proceedings. Cases originating in the United States district courts.
 - (2) Removed from State Court. Proceedings initiated in state courts may be removed to the district courts under Title 28 USC § 1441. When the petition for removal is granted, check this box.
 - (3) Remanded from Appellate Court. Check this box for cases remanded to the district court for further action. Use the date of remand as the filing date.
 - (4) Reinstated or Reopened. Check this box for cases reinstated or reopened in the district court. Use the reopening date as the filing date.
 - (5) Transferred from Another District. For cases transferred under Title 28 USC § 1404(a). Do not use this for within district transfers or multidistrict litigation transfers.
 - (6) Multidistrict Litigation Transfer. Check this box when a multidistrict case is transferred into the district under authority of Title 28 USC § 1407. When this box is checked, do not check (5) above.
 - (8) Multidistrict Litigation Direct File. Check this box when a multidistrict litigation case is filed in the same district as the Master MDL docket. Please note that there is no Origin Code 7. Origin Code 7 was used for historical records and is no longer relevant due to changes in statute.
- VI. Cause of Action.** Report the civil statute directly related to the cause of action and give a brief description of the cause. **Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity.** Example: U.S. Civil Statute: 47 USC § 553. Brief Description: Unauthorized reception of cable service.
- VII. Requested in Complaint.** Class Action. Place an “X” in this box if you are filing a class action under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23. Demand. In this space enter the actual dollar amount being demanded or indicate other demand, such as a preliminary injunction. Jury Demand. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether or not a jury is being demanded.
- VIII. Related Cases.** This section of the JS-CAND 44 is used to identify related pending cases, if any. If there are related pending cases, insert the docket numbers and the corresponding judge names for such cases.
- IX. Divisional Assignment.** If the Nature of Suit is under Property Rights or Prisoner Petitions or the matter is a Securities Class Action, leave this section blank. For all other cases, identify the divisional venue according to Civil Local Rule 3-2: “the county in which a substantial part of the events or omissions which give rise to the claim occurred or in which a substantial part of the property that is the subject of the action is situated.”
- Date and Attorney Signature.** Date and sign the civil cover sheet.