

U.S. NEWS

Panera settles remaining lawsuits over its highly caffeinated Charged Lemonade

The chain faced at least four lawsuits concerning the beverage, including two alleging wrongful deaths.



— Panera last year discontinued its Charged Lemonade, which lawsuits blamed for two deaths and two permanent cardiac injuries. Justin Sullivan / Getty Images file

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By Elizabeth Chuck

Panera Bread has settled three remaining lawsuits that it faced over its highly caffeinated Charged Lemonade, a beverage blamed for two deaths and various permanent injuries.

Plaintiffs' attorney Elizabeth Crawford, a partner at the Philadelphia law firm Kline & Specter, PC, confirmed Wednesday that "the matters have all been resolved." She said she could not comment any further.

Panera also confirmed the legal developments, which were reported first by NBC News, but declined to answer any additional questions.

Charged Lemonade made headlines in October 2023 when the parents of a 21-year-old University of Pennsylvania student with a heart condition filed a lawsuit alleging that their daughter, Sarah Katz, suffered a fatal cardiac arrest after consuming a cup of the drink.

Panera settled that suit last October, which was the first of at least four that were filed against the bakery-cafe chain. A second lawsuit alleged that the drink caused the death of 46-year-old Florida resident Dennis Brown after he drank three Charged Lemonades.

The other two legal complaints alleged the beverage resulted in serious cardiac problems in two previously healthy people: 28-year-old Lauren Skerritt of Rhode Island, and Luke Adams, a Pennsylvania teenager whose lawsuit said he had to be resuscitated hours after he drank a Charged Lemonade.

Crawford represented the plaintiffs in all four cases. Court records showed the remaining three lawsuits were listed on Monday as dismissed with prejudice, meaning the cases cannot be refiled again in the same courts. The cases had previously been scheduled to go to trial.

The lawsuits had referred to Charged Lemonade as a "dangerous energy drink" and accused Panera of failing to appropriately warn customers about its ingredients. When served without ice, a large, 30-fluid-ounce size contained 390 milligrams of caffeine – just barely under the 400 milligrams of caffeine that the Food and Drug Administration says healthy adults can safely consume in a day.

Charged Lemonade also contained guarana extract, another stimulant.

Panera has denied wrongdoing in court documents. Following the lawsuit over Katz's death, the chain made a number of changes, including moving the beverage behind the counter so it was no longer a self-serve offering. It also added signs cautioning that Charged Lemonade should be consumed in moderation and was not recommended for children, people sensitive to caffeine, or pregnant or nursing women.

Panera removed the controversial beverage from its stores nationwide in May 2024, which it said was a part of a "recent menu transformation." 