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**FOOD RECALLS DOMINATE LIST OF  
NATION'S TOP FOOD STORIES OF 2007**

*Pet Food Recall Claims No. 1 "Spot" in Annual Survey of America's Food Editors*

DECEMBER 17, 2007, NEW YORK, NY — When asked to recall the top food stories of the year, food editors overwhelmingly responded that 2007 will be remembered as the Year of the Recall.

In a recent survey of the country's top food editors, **the national recall of more than 90 brands of popular pet food** topped the charts as the **No. 1** food-related story of 2007, followed closely by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's **recall of over 21 million pounds of ground beef** and the **peanut butter recall** by ConAgra Foods, Inc.

The fifth annual year-end survey was conducted by Hunter Public Relations, one of the nation's leading public relations agencies serving the food and beverage industry. Based in New York, Hunter Public Relations reached out to more than 900 magazine and newspaper food editors across the country and asked them to pick the top ten food-related stories of 2007.

The **biggest food story of the year** hit newspapers and TV newscasts in mid-summer with the announcement of a **national recall of 50 brands of dog food and 40 brands of cat food**, manufactured by Menu Foods, Inc. and sold under dozens of well-known brand names. The "cuts and gravy" style products, sold in cans and pouches at national retailers such as Safeway, PetSmart and Wal-Mart, caused more than 450 reported cases of pet kidney failure and more than 100 pet deaths due to kidney complications. The identity of the problematic ingredient remains unknown.

Pet food wasn't the only recall that made headlines this year. Coming in at **No. 2** is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's **recall of more than 21 million pounds of ground beef** made by Topps Meat Co. The recall started in late-September in response to a New York outbreak of

E. coli, and ended up being the third largest hamburger recall in USDA history. Ultimately, the recall led the 67-year-old meat processing company to declare bankruptcy.

Even kid-favorite peanut butter wasn't immune from recalls in 2007. As the first major food recall of 2007, the **peanut butter recall** by ConAgra Foods Inc. was named the **No. 3** food story of the year by food editors. Certain jars of Peter Pan and Great Value peanut butter were linked to a salmonella outbreak that was blamed for sickening almost 600 people nationwide. While this is believed to be the first salmonella outbreak linked to the peanut-based spread, the recall had a strong impact on the nation's pantries – and children's lunchboxes – as salmonella outbreaks linked to peanut butter spread to 47 states.

The government was involved with more than just recalls in the food industry this year. New York Mayor Michael **Bloomberg's attempts to change the way New Yorkers eat** ranked as the **No. 4** story of 2007. Since his appointment to office, Bloomberg has not only attempted to get rid of trans fat and to force large restaurant chains to post calorie counts; his most recent initiative seeks to assist those New Yorkers who need the most help. Bloomberg's recent efforts involve working with the City Council to get more low-income residents to sign up for food stamps and finding ways to get healthy food to people who live in neighborhoods with no grocery stores.

There was something fishy about the **No. 5** story of the year. The Food and Drug Administration's decision to **restrict imports of five kinds of farm-raised seafood from China** raised concerns about the overall safety of imported foods. Investigators found that popular imported seafood – including shrimp, catfish and eel – was contaminated by low levels of a powerful antibiotic called chloramphenicol. Chinese exporters were given the task of proving that their products were not contaminated with any residues of the drugs used in fish farming, while the FDA stepped up the sampling of imported shrimp and crawfish products in response to consumer wariness.

Food editors were intrigued by Americans' growing desire to drink their vitamins and beverage companies' quick responses to make the dream a reality. Coming in at **No. 6** was the proliferation of **nutrient-fortified sodas, juice, teas and flavored waters** on store shelves.

In addition to already existing fortified products like Diet Coke Plus, Coca-Cola Co. is planning on adding vitamins and fiber to its bottled water brand Dasani, and PepsiCo Inc. is already offering SoBe Life Water (enhanced with four B vitamins) and is planning on launching its zero-calorie sparkling Tava drink – infused with vitamins and chromium – in 2008.

The rash of recalls in 2007 left Americans wondering about the source of the food at their local supermarket. Despite a law stating that all food products must carry labels that clearly state the country of origin, the meat, produce and nuts at most local stores quite often lack this information. Americans' concern for this topic led the **country-of-origin labeling controversy** to come in at **No. 7**. This dilemma will likely be resolved in the coming months as Congress rewrites the farm policy and deals with the more widespread concern that, according to the Progressive Policy Institute, more than 98 percent of imported food is never inspected by the USDA or FDA.

An interactive partnership between the FDA and the Cartoon Network left parents grinning. Coming in at **No. 8** is the online-based **program on the Cartoon Network's website that teaches kids ages 9 to 13 how to read food labels**. In addition to offering information on serving sizes and calories, this program educates children on foods high in fat, cholesterol, sodium, and sugar and encourages kids to consume more foods with potassium, fiber, iron, and calcium. The FDA is planning on expanding this initiative and launching a campaign next year geared at reinforcing the same messages for parents.

The **bottled water controversy**, fueled by environmentally conscious consumers and awareness groups, splashed into the **No. 9** slot. The \$15 billion business is under fire for the negative impact its 38 million plastic bottles (which are made with 1.5 million barrels of oil annually) have on the environment. The media attention has led some to question the need for a convenience product that is both costly to the consumer and the environment and, in many cases, is just purified municipal tap water.

Finally, wrapping up the list at **No. 10** is news that **food in McDonald's wrappers wins with kids**. A study had youngsters sample identical McDonald's foods in name-brand and unmarked wrappers. The unmarked foods always lost the taste test. Even vegetables placed in the McDonald's wrapper consistently scored higher than those placed in plain packaging.

In addition to picking the top ten food stories of 2007, those surveyed were asked what they believed food companies should make their number one priority for the coming year. A whopping 59 percent of respondents wished to see food companies reduce the amount of sodium content in their products. Using more local ingredients was also a highly ranked priority.

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