

STATE OF MINNESOTA

DISTRICT COURT

COUNTY OF HENNEPIN

FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
Case Type: PRODUCTS LIABILITY

KATIE MAE STILL,
an individual,

Court File No.

Plaintiff,

v.

GROUPE SEB USA, INC., a
New Jersey Corporation,*Defendant.*

TO: THE STATE OF MINNESOTA TO THE ABOVE-NAMED DEFENDANT:**COMPLAINT**

Plaintiff, **KATIE MAE STILL** (hereafter referred to as “Plaintiff”), by and through her undersigned counsel, **JOHNSON BECKER, PLLC**, hereby submits the following Complaint and Demand for Jury Trial against Defendant **GROUPE SEB USA, INC.**, (hereafter referred to as “Defendant”), and in support thereof alleges as follows:

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. Defendant designs, manufactures, markets, imports, distributes and sells consumer kitchen products, including the subject “Mirro Pressure Cooker,” which specifically includes the Model Number M-0536-11 6 QT. (referred to hereafter as “pressure cooker(s)”) that is at issue in this case.

Join the hundreds of people holding manufacturers accountable for defective and unsafe pressure cookers by asserting your pressure cooker personal injury claim.

Pressure cooker manufacturers market their products as a quick, healthy and safe way to cook. However, the reality is that many of the pressure cookers on the market have serious design flaws that can lead to severe malfunctions. These malfunctions can cause steam and scalding hot liquids and food to explode out of the pressure cooker, burning the user and anyone nearby.

The pressure cooker litigation team at Johnson Becker is experienced at holding manufacturers responsible for defective products. Over the last four years, Johnson Becker has represented over 300 people in more than 40 states who have been burned by exploding pressure cookers. In addition, we have handled pressure cooker cases against virtually all of the major name-brand manufacturers.

Each pressure cooker lawsuit is dependent on its own unique facts, but our firm continues to successfully file lawsuits against the manufacturers of defective pressure cookers and obtain settlements for our clients. We believe that holding manufacturers responsible for our clients' injuries not only helps our clients, but prevents future injuries by forcing manufacturers to evaluate and improve the safety of their products.

What Our Clients Say About Us . . .

“Johnson Becker was so helpful and easy to work with. They were always immediately available to answer my questions and they kept me up to date every step of the way. All the staff were extremely compassionate and professional. If you need a firm to handle your litigation, I highly recommend Johnson Becker.” -*Sandy F.*

“My experience with Johnson and Becker especially working with Mr Adam and Mr Mike has been beyond explainable. They are an amazing team. Mr Adam has been in touch with me throughout the whole process, never left me wondering. This law firm has worked with me to get the best results and . . . everything they said they would do, they did it. I would highly recommend them to anyone who needs a great law firm.” -*Brenika L.*

“The service we received from Adam Kress and his team was outstanding. We came away feeling like we had a new friend. Our biggest surprise was that this company not only works on getting money for their clients, they actually care about getting unsafe products off the market. Thanks Johnson and Becker for making us feel like we helped make the world a little safer!” -*Ken C.*

Meet Our Pressure Cooker Attorneys:

Combined, they have over 55 years of experience holding manufacturers accountable when they choose to put profits over safety.

Michael Johnson

is a founding partner of Johnson Becker and the Co-Chair of its Consumer Products and Mass Tort Departments. Michael exclusively represents individuals across



the country injured by defective and dangerous products, with an emphasis on consumer goods. Michael has battled major product manufacturers at trial, in the appellate courts, and all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Kenneth Pearson

is a partner at Johnson Becker. A graduate of Harvard Law School, Ken began his career representing product manufacturers.



He now draws on that experience to exclusively represent individuals seeking recovery for product-related personal injuries in state and federal courts nationwide.

Adam Kress

began his career at Johnson Becker in 2013, and has exclusively represented plaintiffs in product liability, personal injury and wrongful death claims. Adam co-chairs the firm's Consumer Products Department.



2. Defendant tout the “safety”¹ of their pressure cookers, and state that they cannot be opened while in use. Despite Defendant’s claims of “safety,” they designed, manufactured, marketed, imported, distributed and sold a product that suffers from serious and dangerous defects. Said defects cause significant risk of bodily harm and injury to consumers.

3. Specifically, said defects manifest themselves when, despite Defendant’s statements, the lid of the pressure cooker is removable with built-up pressure, heat and steam still inside the unit. When the lid is removed under such circumstances, the pressure trapped within the unit causes the scalding hot contents to be projected from the unit and into the surrounding area, including onto the unsuspecting consumers, their families and other bystanders. The Plaintiff in this case was able to remove the lid while the pressure cooker retained pressure, causing her serious and substantial bodily injuries and damages including, but not limited to, partial thickness burns to her upper extremities, chest and abdomen.

4. Defendant knew or should have known of these defects but has nevertheless put profit ahead of safety by continuing to sell its pressure cookers to consumers, failing to warn said consumers of the serious risks posed by the defects, and failing to recall the dangerously defective pressure cookers regardless of the risk of significant injuries to Plaintiff and consumers like her.

5. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant’s conduct, the Plaintiff in this case incurred significant and painful bodily injuries, medical expenses, lost wages, physical pain, mental anguish, and diminished enjoyment of life.

¹ See, e.g. Mirro Pressure Cooker Owner’s manual, pgs. 2 for the purported “special features,” including a “vent tube” that “safely and efficiently exhaust[s] pressure.” A copy of the Owner’s manual is attached hereto as “Exhibit A”.

PLAINTIFF KATIE MAE STILL

6. Plaintiff is resident of the City of Brooklyn Park, County of Hennepin, State of Minnesota.

7. On or about February 1, 2017, Plaintiff suffered serious and substantial burn injuries as the direct and proximate result of the pressure cooker's lid being able to be rotated and opened while the pressure cooker was still under pressure, during the normal, directed use of the pressure cooker, allowing its scalding hot contents to be forcefully ejected from the pressure cooker and onto Plaintiff. The incident occurred as a result of the failure of the pressure cooker's supposed "special features,"² which purport to "safely and efficiently exhaust pressure". In addition, the incident occurred as the result of Defendant's failure to redesign the pressure cooker, despite the existence of economical, safer alternative designs.

GROUPE SEB USA, INC.

8. Defendant designs, manufactures, markets, imports, distributes and sells a variety of consumer kitchen products including pressure cookers, juicers, coffee makers, and air-fryers, amongst others.

9. Defendant Groupe SEB USA, Inc. ("SEB USA") is a Delaware Corporation, with a principal business located at 5 Woodhollow Road, Fl. 2, Parsippany, New Jersey 07054-2834, and does business in all 50 states. At all times relevant, SEB USA substantially participated in the design, manufacture, marketing, distribution and sale of the subject pressure cooker, which caused Plaintiff's injuries and damages.

² *Id.*

JURISDICTION & VENUE

10. At all times relevant herein, Defendant purposefully availed itself of the privilege of conducting business in the State of Minnesota and has continuously and systematically caused its products to be sold in the State of Minnesota. Therefore, jurisdiction is proper pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 543.19, as well as the Due Process Clauses of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution of the United States of America.

11. Venue is proper pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 542.09. Plaintiff resides, was injured in, and “arose” in Hennepin County. Additionally, the Defendant named herein regularly conducts business in Hennepin County.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

12. Defendant are engaged in the business of designing, manufacturing, warranting, marketing, importing, distributing and selling the pressure cookers at issue in this litigation.

13. According to the Owner’s Manual accompanying each individual unit sold, the pressure cookers purport to be designed with a “special features,”³ misleading the consumer into believing that the pressure cookers are reasonably safe for their normal, intended use. Said “special features” include, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. **VENT TUBE:** Vent tube has five ports. If bottom opening of tube should become obstructed with food, four auxiliary ports on side of tube *safely and efficiently exhaust pressure*.
- b. **LOCK LEVER:** Drops into locked position in bottom handle (grip) when cover is properly closed and pressure begins to rise. *Will unlock when pressure is exhausted*.
- c. **REMINDER RING:** Handy reminder ring (long-handle models only) dropped over pan handle is an indication that cooker has been properly closed and is ready for use.

³ *Id.*

14. By reason of the forgoing acts or omissions, the above-named Plaintiff and/or her family purchased the pressure cooker with the reasonable expectation that it was properly designed and manufactured, free from defects of any kind, and that it was safe for its intended, foreseeable use of cooking.

15. Plaintiff used her pressure cooker for its intended purpose of preparing meals for herself and/or family and did so in a manner that was reasonable and foreseeable by the Defendant.

16. However, the aforementioned pressure cooker was defectively and negligently designed and manufactured by the Defendant in that it failed to properly function as to prevent the lid from being removed with normal force while the unit remained pressurized, despite the appearance that all the pressure had been released, during the ordinary, foreseeable and proper use of cooking food with the product; placing the Plaintiff, her family, and similar consumers in danger while using the pressure cookers.

17. Defendant's pressure cookers possess defects that make them unreasonably dangerous for their intended use by consumers because the lid can be rotated and opened while the unit remains pressurized.

18. Further, Defendant's representations about "safety" are not just misleading, they are flatly wrong, and put innocent consumers like Plaintiff directly in harm's way.

19. Economic, safer alternative designs were available that could have prevented the Pressure Cooker's lid from being rotated and opened while pressurized.

20. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant failure to warn consumers of such defects, its negligent misrepresentations, its failure to remove a product with such defects from the stream of commerce, and its negligent design of such products, Plaintiff used an

unreasonably dangerous pressure cooker, which resulted in significant and painful bodily injuries upon Plaintiff's simple removal of the lid of the Pressure Cooker.

21. Consequently, the Plaintiff in this case seeks compensatory damages resulting from the use of Defendant's pressure cooker as described above, which has caused the Plaintiff to suffer from serious bodily injuries, medical expenses, physical pain, mental anguish, diminished enjoyment of life, and other damages.

SPECIFIC COUNTS

COUNT ONE **STRICT LIABILITY (DEFECTIVE DESIGN)**

22. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all other paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully set forth herein, and further alleges:

23. Defendant is the designer, manufacturer, seller, distributor, marketer, and supplier of the subject pressure cooker which was defectively designed and was unreasonably dangerous for its intended use by foreseeable consumers such as Plaintiff.

24. The subject pressure cooker was unreasonably dangerous in design due to the pressure cooker's lid being able to be rotated and opened while the pressure cooker was still under pressure, during the normal, directed use of the pressure cooker, allowing its scalding hot contents to be forcefully ejected from the pressure cooker and onto Plaintiff.

25. The aforementioned design defects rendered Defendant's product unsafe and unfit for its intended use.

26. Defendant's product was in this defective and dangerous condition at the time it left Defendant's possession.

27. Defendant failed to act reasonably in choosing a design of the subject pressure cooker that would prevent the lid from being able to be rotated and opened while the pressure cooker was still under pressure,

28. Defendant could and should have used a safer alternative design to prevent the removal of the lid of the pressure cooker while it remained pressurized.

29. A reasonable consumer, including Plaintiff, would not have reason to expect that the subject pressure cooker would retain pressure despite the appearance that all pressure had been released, would not be able detect any such defect, and would not have any knowledge as to how to prevent such an incident occurring.

30. The subject pressure cooker was expected to reach and did reach the intended consumers, including Plaintiff, without substantial change in the condition in which it was sold.

31. Plaintiff did not misuse or materially alter the subject pressure cooker and is unaware as to how she could have avoided the incident.

32. The subject pressure cooker was defective at the time of its design, and such defects and risks of harm outweighed the utilities and/or benefits of its design.

33. At the time it was sold, Defendant knew or should have known that their pressure cookers possessed defects that pose a serious safety risk to Plaintiff and the public.

34. As a direct and proximate result of the design defects contained within the subject pressure cooker, Plaintiff suffered and continues to suffer injuries and damages, for which the Defendant in this case is liable.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs demand judgment against Defendant for damages, together with interest, costs of suit, and all such other relief as the Court deems proper.

COUNT TWO
STRICT LIABILITY (DEFECTIVE MANUFACTURE)

35. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all other paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully set forth herein, and further alleges:

36. Defendant is the designer, manufacturer, seller, distributor, marketer, and supplier of the subject pressure cooker, which was defectively manufactured.

37. Defendant's product deviated from the manufacturing and design specifications, formulae, performance standards and from otherwise identical units of this product type.

38. The subject pressure cooker did not operate in accordance with performance standards to prevent the lid from being rotated while the unit was still pressurized.

39. The subject pressure cooker was unreasonably dangerous due to the pressure cooker's lid being able to be rotated and opened while the pressure cooker was still under pressure, during the normal, directed use of the pressure cooker, allowing its scalding hot contents to be forcefully ejected from the pressure cooker and onto Plaintiff.

40. At the time the subject pressure cooker was manufactured, marketed, distributed and sold by the Defendant; it was defective, unsafe, and unreasonably dangerous for its intended and foreseeable use(s) by consumers, including Plaintiff, due to these manufacturing defects or omissions by Defendant.

41. The manufacturing defects allowed the pressure cooker's lid to be able to be rotated and opened while the pressure cooker was still under pressure, during the normal, directed use of the pressure cooker, allowing its scalding hot contents to be forcefully ejected from the pressure cooker and onto Plaintiff.

42. Defendant failed to conduct adequate safety testing and inspection of the subject pressure cooker.

43. The subject pressure cooker was expected to reach and did reach the intended consumers, including Plaintiff, without substantial change in the condition in which it was sold.

44. A reasonable consumer, including Plaintiff, would not have reason to expect that the subject pressure cooker would retain pressure despite the appearance that all pressure had been released, would not be able detect any such defect, and would not have any knowledge as to how to prevent such an incident occurring.

45. The subject pressure cooker was expected to reach and did reach the intended consumers, including Plaintiff, without substantial change in the condition in which it was sold.

46. Plaintiff did not misuse or materially alter the subject pressure cooker and is unaware as to how she could have avoided the incident.

47. The subject pressure cooker was defective at the time of its design, and such defects and risks of harm outweighed the utilities and/or benefits of its design.

48. At the time it was sold, Defendant knew or should have known that their pressure cookers possessed defects that pose a serious safety risk to Plaintiff and the public.

49. As a direct and proximate result of the design defects contained within the subject pressure cooker, Plaintiff suffered and continues to suffer injuries and damages, for which the Defendant in this case is liable.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs demand judgment against Defendant for damages, together with interest, costs of suit, and all such other relief as the Court deems proper.

COUNT THREE
STRICT LIABILITY (FAILURE TO WARN)

50. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all other paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully set forth herein, and further alleges:

51. Defendant is the designer, manufacturer, seller, distributor, marketer, and supplier of the subject pressure cooker, which contained inadequate and incomplete warnings for foreseeable consumers and users, including Plaintiff.

52. The subject pressure cooker did not contain adequate warnings or instructions for use, making it defective and unreasonably dangerous to consumers and foreseeable users of the subject pressure cooker, including Plaintiff.

53. Defendant failed to warn foreseeable users and consumers, including Plaintiff, of any specific risk of harm, including that the pressure cooker's lid could be rotated and opened while the pressure cooker was still under pressure, during the normal, directed use of the pressure cooker.

54. At the time it was sold, Defendant knew or should have known that their pressure cookers possessed defects that pose a serious safety risk to Plaintiff and the public.

55. As a direct and proximate result of the Defendant's failure to warn and/or inadequate instructions, Plaintiff suffered and continues to suffer injuries and damages, for which the Defendant in this case are liable.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs demand judgment against Defendant for damages, together with interest, costs of suit, and all such other relief as the Court deems proper.

COUNT FOUR
NEGLIGENCE

56. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all other paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully set forth herein, and further alleges:

57. Defendant had a duty of reasonable care to design, manufacture, market and sell non-defective batteries that were reasonably safe for their intended use by Plaintiff and consumers alike.

58. Defendant had a duty of reasonable care to design, manufacture, market, and sell non-defective pressure cookers that are reasonably safe for their intended uses by consumers, such as Plaintiff and her family.

59. Defendant failed to exercise ordinary care in the manufacture, sale, warnings, quality assurance, quality control, distribution, advertising, promotion, sale and marketing of its pressure cookers in that Defendant knew or should have known that said pressure cookers created a high risk of unreasonable harm to the Plaintiff and consumers alike.

60. Defendant was negligent in the design, manufacture, advertising, warning, marketing and sale of its pressure cookers in that, among other things, it:

- a. Failed to use due care in designing and manufacturing the pressure cookers to avoid the aforementioned risks to individuals;
- b. Placed an unsafe product into the stream of commerce;
- c. Aggressively over-promoted and marketed its pressure cookers through television, social media, and other advertising outlets; and
- d. Were otherwise careless or negligent.

61. As a direct and proximate result of the Defendant's negligence, Plaintiff suffered and continues to suffer injuries and damages, for which the Defendant in this case are liable.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs demand judgment against Defendant for damages, together with interest, costs of suit, and all such other relief as the Court deems proper.

INJURIES & DAMAGES

62. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's strict liability, collective negligence and wrongful misconduct as described herein, Plaintiff has suffered and will continue to suffer physical and emotional injuries and damages including past, present, and future physical and emotional pain and suffering as a result of the incident on or about February 1,

2017. Plaintiff is entitled to recover damages from Defendant for these injuries in an amount which shall be proven at trial.

63. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's strict liability, negligence and wrongful misconduct, as set forth herein, Plaintiff has incurred and will continue to incur the loss of full enjoyment of life and disfigurement as a result of the incident on or about February 1, 2017. Plaintiff is entitled to recover damages for loss of the full enjoyment of life and disfigurement from Defendant in an amount to be proven at trial.

64. As a direct and proximate cause of Defendant's strict liability, negligence and wrongful misconduct, as set forth herein, Plaintiff has incurred medical treatment expenses and will continue to incur expenses for medical care and treatment, as well as other expenses, as a result of the burn she suffered as a result of the incident on or about February 1, 2017. Plaintiff is entitled to recover damages from Defendant for her past, present and future medical and other expenses in an amount which shall be proven at trial.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs demand judgment against Defendant for damages, together with interest, costs of suit, and all such other relief as the Court deems proper.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against the Defendant for damages, as well as all costs of this action, to the full extent of the law, whether arising under the common law and/or statutory law, including:

- a. judgment for Plaintiff and against Defendant;
- b. damages to compensate Plaintiff for his injuries and suffering sustained as a result of the use of the Defendant's pressure cooker;
- c. pre and post judgment interest at the lawful rate;
- d. a trial by jury on all issues of the case;

- e. for any other relief as this Court may deem equitable and just, or that may be available under the law of another forum to the extent the law of another forum is applied, including but not limited to all reliefs prayed for in this Complaint and in the foregoing Prayer for Relief.

Respectfully submitted,

JOHNSON BECKER, PLLC

Dated: 01/26/2021

/s/ Adam J. Kress, Esq.

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