

Sheehan & Associates, P.C.
Spencer Sheehan
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(516) 303-0552

United States District Court
Eastern District of New York

1:19-cv-01248

Walter Faison individually and on behalf of
all others similarly situated

Plaintiff

- against -

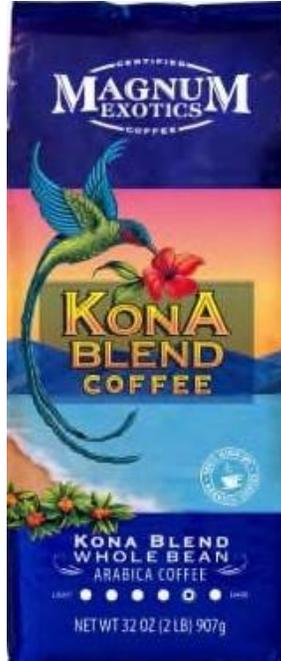
Complaint

L & K Coffee Co., L.L.C.

Defendant

Plaintiff by attorneys alleges upon information and belief, except for allegations pertaining to plaintiff, which are based on personal knowledge:

1. L & K Coffee Co., L.L.C. (“defendant”) sells coffee products under the Magnum Exotics label, available to consumers nationwide at brick-and-mortar retailers including Costco, Walmart, T.J. Maxx and Marshalls, third-party websites and directly from defendant’s website.
2. The Products are represented to contain non-insignificant quantities of Kona coffee.
3. The representations are expressed on the packaging and defendant’s website, and include “Kona High Mountain Coffee,” “Certified,” “Kona Blend Coffee,” “Grown high in the mountains of Hawaii, this blended coffee has the perfect balance of light taste, full body and moderate acidity,” and “100% High MT. Arabica Coffee” and imagery of tropical beaches, humming and toucan birds and hibiscus flowers.



4. However, the representations are misleading because the Products' composition is different from what a reasonable consumer would expect given the labels and marketing.

5. Approximately 2.7 million pounds of Kona coffee is harvested each year, compared to 20 billion pounds of green coffee – 0.01% of worldwide coffee production.

6. The term “Kona” tells consumers their coffee comes from the distinctive geographic region in the Kona District on the Big Island of Hawaii.

7. Kona coffee's distinctive qualities are due to the unique humidity and rainfall imparted by the region's proximity to the Pacific Ocean.

8. The volcanic soil and elevation in which the coffee is grown imparts distinct flavor tones to Kona coffee, a result of the internal composition of the coffee beans.

9. Kona coffee can be distinguished by elemental and isotopic analysis, which tests for the concentration ratios of various chemical elements identified as markers for authenticity.

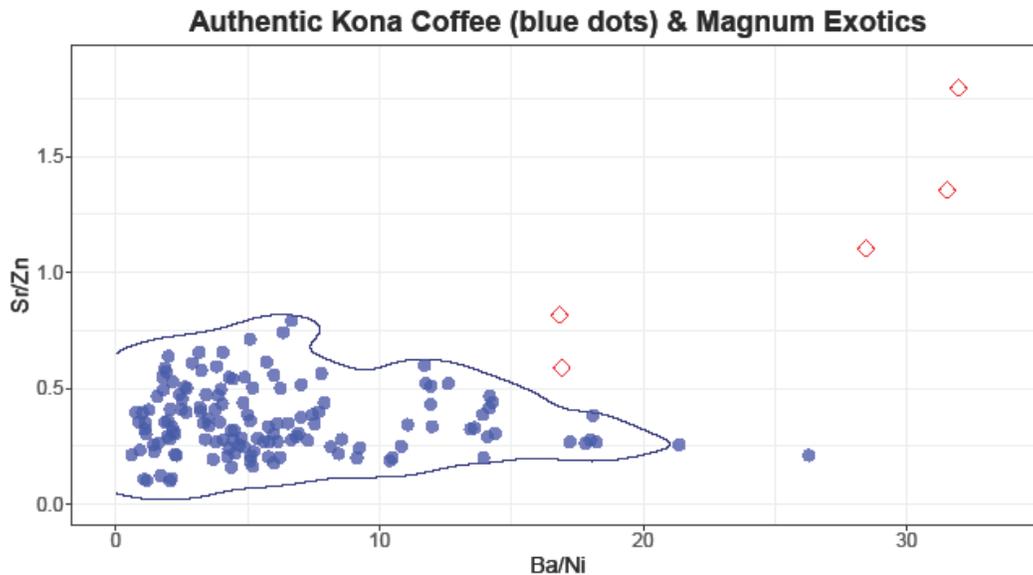
10. These include ratios between the concentration of strontium (Sr) and zinc (Zn), barium (Ba) and nickel (Ni), cobalt (Co) and zinc (Zn) and manganese (Mn) and nickel (Ni).

11. Recent scientific testing on the authenticity of Kona coffee has used strontium isotopes and hydrogen and oxygen isotopes.

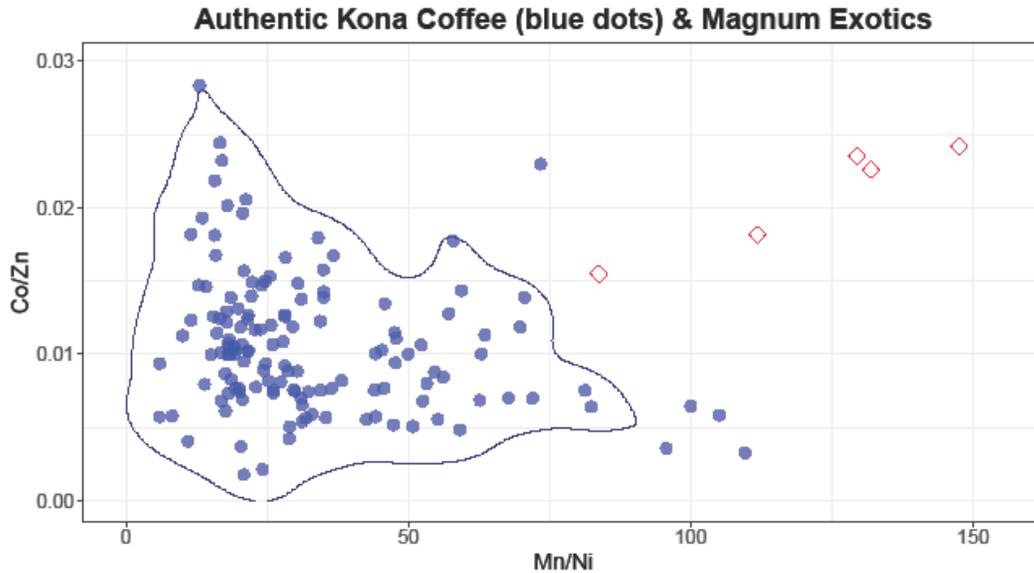
12. Where a sample contains reasonable and non-insubstantial amounts of Kona coffee, these ratios will fall within a narrow range and can be plotted on a scatter plot, to indicate concentration ratios consistent with Kona coffee, derived from the testing of over one hundred verified samples.

13. The testing results in the following two tables compares concentration ratios on a scatter plot, with the blue dots representing authentic Kona coffee and the red diamonds representing the Products.

14. The first graph reveals the Products' concentration ratios of strontium-to-zinc and barium-to-nickel are outside the range of authentic Kona.



15. The second graph displays the concentration ratios of cobalt-to-zinc and manganese-to-nickel, which support the inferences of the first graph.



16. Authentic Kona has an average of less than forty times (40x) as much manganese as nickel while the Products' samples range as high as one hundred forty-five times (145x) as much manganese as nickel leads to the conclusion.

17. A reasonable consumer would not expect a product labeled a Kona blend to contain 100% Kona, but would expect an amount significant enough to characterize the overall blend, and that amount is absent from the Products.

18. The Products contain other representations which are misleading and deceptive.

19. Excluding tax, the Products cost no less than \$6.99, a premium price compared to other similar products.

Jurisdiction and Venue

20. Jurisdiction is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332(d)(2).

21. Upon information and belief, the aggregate amount in controversy is more than \$5,000,000.00, exclusive of interests and costs.

22. This court has personal jurisdiction over defendant because it conducts and transacts

business, contracts to supply and supplies goods within New York.

23. Venue is proper because plaintiff and many class members reside in this District and defendant does business in this District and in New York.

24. A substantial part of events and omissions giving rise to the claims occurred in this District.

Parties

25. Plaintiff is a citizen of Queens County, New York.

26. John and Jane Doe plaintiffs are citizens of the other 49 states.

27. Defendant is a Michigan limited liability company with a principal place of business in Nunica, Michigan (Ottawa County) and upon information and belief, no member is a citizen of this state.

28. During the class period, plaintiffs purchased one or more Products for personal consumption, for no less than \$6.99, excluding tax, within this district and/or State.

29. Plaintiff paid this premium because prior to purchase, plaintiffs saw and relied on the misleading representations.

30. Plaintiffs would purchase the Products again if there were assurances that the representations were no longer misleading.

Class Allegations

31. The classes consist of all consumers in the following states: all, New York, who purchased any Products with actionable representations during the statutes of limitation.

32. A class action is superior to other methods for fair and efficient adjudication.

33. The class is so numerous that joinder of all members, even if permitted, is impracticable, as there are likely hundreds of thousands of members.

34. Common questions of law or fact predominate and include whether the representations were likely to deceive reasonable consumers and if plaintiff(s) and class members are entitled to damages.

35. Plaintiff(s) claims and the basis for relief are typical to other members because all were subjected to the same representations.

36. Plaintiff(s) is/are an adequate representative because his/her/their interests do not conflict with other members.

37. No individual inquiry is necessary since the focus is only on defendant's practices and the class is definable and ascertainable.

38. Individual actions would risk inconsistent results, be repetitive and are impractical to justify, as the claims are modest.

39. Plaintiff(s) counsel is competent and experienced in complex class action litigation and intends to adequately and fairly protect class members' interests.

40. Plaintiff(s) seeks class-wide injunctive relief because the practices continue.

New York General Business Law ("GBL") §§ 349 & 350
and Consumer Protection Statutes of Other States and Territories

41. Plaintiff and John Doe plaintiffs representing other states, incorporates by reference all preceding paragraphs and asserts causes of action under the consumer protection statutes of all fifty (50) states, where John and Jane Doe Plaintiffs reside and have purchased the Products.

- a. Alabama Deceptive Trade Practices Act, Ala. Code § 8-19-1, *et. seq.*;
- b. Alaska Unfair Trade Practices and Consumer Protection Act, Ak. Code § 45.50.471, *et. seq.*;
- c. Arkansas Deceptive Trade Practices Act, Ark. Code § 4-88-101, *et. seq.*;
- d. California Consumers Legal Remedies Act, Cal. Civ. Code §§ 1750 *et seq.* and Unfair

- Competition Law, Cal. Bus. Prof. Code §§ 17200- 17210 *et. seq.*;
- e. Colorado Consumer Protection Act, Colo Rev. Stat § 6-1-101, *et. seq.*;
 - f. Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act, Conn. Gen Stat § 42-110a, *et. seq.*;
 - g. Delaware Deceptive Trade Practices Act, 6 Del. Code § 2511, *et. seq.*;
 - h. District of Columbia Consumer Protection Procedures Act, D.C. Code §§ 28-3901, *et. seq.*;
 - i. Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices, Act *Florida Statutes* § 501.201, *et. seq.*;
 - j. Georgia Fair Business Practices Act, §10-1-390 *et. seq.*;
 - k. Hawaii Unfair and Deceptive Practices Act, Hawaii Revised Statutes § 480 1, *et. seq.* and Hawaii Uniform Deceptive Trade Practices Act, Hawaii Revised Statute § 481A-1, *et. seq.*;
 - l. Idaho Consumer Protection Act, Idaho Code § 48-601, *et. seq.*;
 - m. Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act, 815 ILCS § 505/1, *et. seq.*;
 - n. Kansas Consumer Protection Act, Kan. Stat. Ann §§ 50 626, *et. seq.*;
 - o. Kentucky Consumer Protection Act, Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. §§ 367.110, *et. seq.*, and the Kentucky Unfair Trade Practices Act, Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann § 365.020, *et. seq.*;
 - p. Louisiana Unfair Trade Practices and Consumer Protection Law, La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §§ 51:1401, *et. seq.*;
 - q. Maine Unfair Trade Practices Act, 5 Me. Rev. Stat. § 205A, *et. seq.*, and Maine Uniform Deceptive Trade Practices Act, Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. 10, § 1211, *et. seq.*;
 - r. Massachusetts Unfair and Deceptive Practices Act, Mass. Gen Laws ch. 93A;
 - s. Michigan Consumer Protection Act, §§ 445.901, *et. seq.*;
 - t. Minnesota Prevention of Consumer Fraud Act, Minn. Stat §§ 325F.68, *et. seq.*; and Minnesota Uniform Deceptive Trade Practices Act, Minn Stat. § 325D.43, *et. seq.*;
 - u. Mississippi Consumer Protection Act, Miss. Code An. §§ 75-24-1, *et. seq.*;

- v. Missouri Merchandising Practices Act, Mo. Rev. Stat. § 407.010, *et. seq.*;
- w. Montana Unfair Trade Practices and Consumer Protection Act, Mont. Code § 30-14-101, *et. seq.*;
- x. Nebraska Consumer Protection Act, neb. Rev. Stat. § 59 1601 *et. seq.*, and the Nebraska Uniform Deceptive Trade Practices Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. § 87-301, *et. seq.*;
- y. Nevada Trade Regulation and Practices Act, Nev. Rev. Stat. §§ 598.0903, *et. seq.*;
- z. New Hampshire Consumer Protection Act, N.H. Rev. Stat. § 358-A:1, *et. seq.*;
- aa. New Jersey Consumer Fraud Act, N.J. Stat. Ann. §§ 56:8 1, *et. seq.*;
- bb. New Mexico Unfair Practices Act, N.M. Sta. Ann. §§ 57 12 1, *et. seq.*;
- cc. North Dakota Consumer Fraud Act, N.D. Cent. Code §§ 51 15 01, *et. seq.*;
- dd. Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §§ 1345.02 and 1345.03; Ohio Admin. Code §§ 109;
- ee. Oklahoma Consumer Protection Act, Okla. Stat. 15 § 751, *et. seq.*;
- ff. Oregon Unfair Trade Practices Act, Ore. Rev. Stat. § 646.608(e) & (g);
- gg. Rhode Island Unfair Trade Practices and Consumer Protection Act, R.I. Gen. Laws § 6-13.1-1 *et. seq.*;
- hh. South Carolina Unfair Trade Practices Act, S.C. Code Law § 39-5-10, *et. seq.*;
- ii. South Dakota's Deceptive Trade Practices and Consumer Protection Law, S.D. Codified Laws §§ 37 24 1, *et. seq.*;
- jj. Tennessee Consumer Protection Act, Tenn. Code Ann. § 47-18-101 *et. seq.*;
- kk. Vermont Consumer Fraud Act, Vt. Stat. Ann. Tit. 9, § 2451, *et. seq.*;
- ll. Washington Consumer Fraud Act, Wash. Rev. Code § 19.86/0101, *et. seq.*;
- mm. West Virginia Consumer Credit and Protection Act, West Virginia Code § 46A-6-101, *et. seq.*;

nn. Wisconsin Deceptive Trade Practices Act, Wis. Stat. §§ 100.18, *et. seq.*

42. Defendant's representations and omissions are false, unfair, deceptive and misleading and are not unique to the parties and have a broader impact on the public.

43. Defendant's acts, practices, advertising, labeling, packaging, representations and omissions are not unique to the parties and have a broader impact on the public.

44. Plaintiff desired to purchase products which were as described by defendant and expected by reasonable consumers, given the product type.

45. The representations and omissions were relied on by plaintiff and class members, who paid more than they would have, causing damages.

Negligent Misrepresentation

46. Plaintiff incorporates by references all preceding paragraphs.

47. Defendant misrepresented the composition of the Products.

48. Defendant had a duty to disclose and/or provide non-deceptive labeling of the Products and knew or should have known same were false or misleading.

49. This duty is based on defendant's purported position as a learned intermediary and an entity which has held itself out as having special knowledge in the production and sale of coffee.

50. Defendant negligently misrepresented and/or negligently omitted material facts.

51. Plaintiff reasonably and justifiably relied on these negligent misrepresentations and omissions, which served to induce and did induce, the purchase of the Products.

52. Plaintiff and class members would not have purchased the Products or paid as much if the true facts had been known, thereby suffering damages.

Breach of Express Warranty and Implied Warranty of Merchantability

53. Plaintiff incorporates by references all preceding paragraphs.

54. Defendant manufactures, packages, distributes and sells Products which purport to contain a non-insignificant amount of Kona coffee.

55. The Products warranted to plaintiff and class members that they possessed functional, substantive, organoleptic, sensory, physical and other attributes which they did not.

56. Defendant warranted such attributes to plaintiff and class members, when this was not truthful and was misleading.

57. The Products did not conform to their affirmations of fact and promises, wholly due to defendant's actions.

58. The Products were not merchantable in their final sale form.

59. Plaintiff and class members relied on the claims, paying more than they would have.

Fraud

60. Plaintiff incorporates by references all preceding paragraphs.

61. Defendant's purpose was to mislead consumers who seek products which unique and premium attributes.

62. Defendant's intent was to secure economic advantage in the marketplace against competitors.

63. Plaintiff and class members relied on the claims, paying more than they would have.

Unjust Enrichment

64. Plaintiff incorporates by references all preceding paragraphs.

65. Defendant obtained benefits and monies because the Products were not as represented and expected, to the detriment and impoverishment of plaintiff and class members, who seek restitution and disgorgement of inequitably obtained profits.

Jury Demand and Prayer for Relief

Plaintiff demands a jury trial on all issues.

WHEREFORE, plaintiff prays for judgment:

1. Declaring this a proper class action, certifying plaintiff(s) as representative and the undersigned as counsel for the class;
2. Entering preliminary and permanent injunctive relief by directing defendant to correct such practices to comply with the law;
3. Awarding monetary damages and interest, including treble and punitive damages, pursuant to the common law, GBL and other statutory claims;
4. Awarding costs and expenses, including reasonable fees for plaintiffs' attorneys and experts; and
5. Such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Dated: March 3, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

Sheehan & Associates, P.C.

/s/Spencer Sheehan

Spencer Sheehan (SS-8533)

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Joshua Levin-Epstein

1 Penn Plaza, Suite 2527

New York, NY 10119

1:19-cv-01248
United States District Court
Eastern District of New York

Walter Faison individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated

Plaintiff

- against -

L & K Coffee Co., L.L.C.

Defendant

Complaint

Sheehan & Associates, P.C.
505 Northern Blvd., #311
Great Neck, NY 11021
Tel: (516) 303-0052
Fax: (516) 234-7800

Pursuant to 22 NYCRR 130-1.1, the undersigned, an attorney admitted to practice in the courts of New York State, certifies that, upon information, and belief, formed after an inquiry reasonable under the circumstances, the contentions contained in the annexed documents are not frivolous.

Dated: March 3, 2019

/s/ Spencer Sheehan
Spencer Sheehan

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 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 by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS
Walter Faison individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Queens
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)
Sheehan & Associates, P.C., 505 Northern Boulevard, Suite 311, Great Neck, NY 11021, (516) 303-0552

DEFENDANTS
L & K Coffee Co., L.L.C.
County of Residence of First Listed Defendant
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
2 U.S. Government Defendant
3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)
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
Citizen of Another State
Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country
PTF DEF
1 1 Incorporated or Principal Place of Business In This State
2 2 Incorporated and Principal Place of Business In Another State
3 3 Foreign Nation
4 4
5 5
6 6

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

Table with 5 columns: CONTRACT, REAL PROPERTY, TORTS, CIVIL RIGHTS, PRISONER PETITIONS, FORFEITURE/PENALTY, LABOR, IMMIGRATION, BANKRUPTCY, SOCIAL SECURITY, FEDERAL TAX SUITS, OTHER STATUTES. Contains various legal categories and checkboxes.

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
Brief description of cause:
False advertising

VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:
CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P.
DEMAND \$ 5,000,000.00
CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint:
JURY DEMAND: Yes No

VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY
(See instructions):
JUDGE
DOCKET NUMBER

DATE 03/03/2019
SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD /s/ Spencer Sheehan

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
RECEIPT # AMOUNT APPLYING IFP JUDGE MAG. JUDGE

CERTIFICATION OF ARBITRATION ELIGIBILITY

Local Arbitration Rule 83.10 provides that with certain exceptions, actions seeking money damages only in an amount not in excess of \$150,000, exclusive of interest and costs, are eligible for compulsory arbitration. The amount of damages is presumed to be below the threshold amount unless a certification to the contrary is filed.

I, Spencer Sheehan, counsel for plaintiff, do hereby certify that the above captioned civil action is ineligible for compulsory arbitration for the following reason(s):

- monetary damages sought are in excess of \$150,000, exclusive of interest and costs,
- the complaint seeks injunctive relief,
- the matter is otherwise ineligible for the following reason

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT - FEDERAL RULES CIVIL PROCEDURE 7.1

Identify any parent corporation and any publicly held corporation that owns 10% or more of its stocks:

RELATED CASE STATEMENT (Section VIII on the Front of this Form)

Please list all cases that are arguably related pursuant to Division of Business Rule 50.3.1 in Section VIII on the front of this form. Rule 50.3.1 (a) provides that "A civil case is "related" to another civil case for purposes of this guideline when, because of the similarity of facts and legal issues or because the cases arise from the same transactions or events, a substantial saving of judicial resources is likely to result from assigning both cases to the same judge and magistrate judge." Rule 50.3.1 (b) provides that " A civil case shall not be deemed "related" to another civil case merely because the civil case: (A) involves identical legal issues, or (B) involves the same parties." Rule 50.3.1 (c) further provides that "Presumptively, and subject to the power of a judge to determine otherwise pursuant to paragraph (d), civil cases shall not be deemed to be "related" unless both cases are still pending before the court."

NY-E DIVISION OF BUSINESS RULE 50.1(d)(2)

- 1.) Is the civil action being filed in the Eastern District removed from a New York State Court located in Nassau or Suffolk County? No
- 2.) If you answered "no" above:
 - a) Did the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in Nassau or Suffolk County? No
 - b) Did the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in the Eastern District? Yes

If your answer to question 2 (b) is "No," does the defendant (or a majority of the defendants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau or Suffolk County, or, in an interpleader action, does the claimant (or a majority of the claimants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau or Suffolk County? _____

(Note: A corporation shall be considered a resident of the County in which it has the most significant contacts).

BAR ADMISSION

I am currently admitted in the Eastern District of New York and currently a member in good standing of the bar of this court.

- Yes
- No

Are you currently the subject of any disciplinary action (s) in this or any other state or federal court?

- Yes (If yes, please explain)
- No

I certify the accuracy of all information provided above.

Signature: /s/ Spencer Sheehan

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: [Class Action Lawsuit Alleges L & K Coffee Co. Misrepresents Amounts of Kona Coffee in Magnum Exotics Blend Product](#)
