

Blue Bell resumes selling ice cream after listeria recall

August 31 2015



Blue Bell personnel Freddie Hugo, from left, Rickey Seilheimer, and Charlie Franke stock freezers with Blue Bell products early Monday, Aug. 31, 2015, in Brenham, Texas. Blue Bell Creameries resumed selling its products at select locations Monday, four months after the Texas-based retailer halted sales due to listeria contamination. Blue Bell ice cream is now available at stores in the Houston and Austin areas, including in the company's hometown of Brenham, plus parts of Alabama. (Steve Gonzales/Houston Chronicle via AP)

Blue Bell ice cream is back.

Blue Bell Creameries resumed selling its products at some locations Monday, four months after the Texas-based retailer halted sales due to listeria contamination at some plants prompted health concerns that drew the regulatory scrutiny of federal and state officials.

Blue Bell ice cream is available again at stores in the Houston and Austin areas, including in the company's hometown of Brenham, plus in parts of Alabama.

Some retailers limited purchases as Blue Bell brought out flavors including homemade vanilla, Dutch chocolate, cookies 'n cream and a side-by-side blend of chocolate and vanilla.

A Blue Bell delivery truck rolled up Monday to the Texas Capitol in Austin, with complimentary half-gallons for Gov. Greg Abbott, who shared the ice cream with his staff, said Cait Meisenheimer, an Abbott aide.

A grocery store in the Houston area held a Blue Bell ice cream-eating contest Monday.

The company had voluntarily recalled its products in April after they were linked to 10 listeria cases in four states, including three deaths in Kansas. Listeria bacteria can cause serious illness, especially in older adults, pregnant women and those with weakened immune systems.

The company, according to its website, collected approximately 8 million gallons of ice cream and ice cream products.

Production plants in Texas, Oklahoma and Alabama underwent an extensive cleaning and decontamination, under the regulatory oversight of health officials. Hundreds of Blue Bell workers were laid off.

The Blue Bell plant in Sylacauga, Alabama, began producing ice cream in July. The company announced plans on Aug. 17 to resume distribution to some markets.

Officials with the U.S. Department of Commerce were in Brenham on Monday to announce a nearly \$1.4 million grant to build a workforce and technical training center. The money goes to the Brenham Economic Development Foundation. Federal authorities cited Blue Bell issues and recent downturns in the oil and gas industries.

Texas billionaire Sid Bass became an investor in Blue Bell Creameries after the privately held company was unable to raise enough capital from existing shareholders, according to CEO and President Paul Kruse.

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