

## Target cuts ties with Deen; drugmaker distances

June 27 2013, by Anne D'innocenzio

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(AP)—Paula Deen's merchandise and media empire is fast unraveling.

Retailers Target Corp. and Home Depot Inc. and [diabetes drug](#) maker Novo Nordisk became the latest companies to sever ties or distance themselves from celebrity cook Paula Deen as fallout builds from revelations that the Southern celebrity chef used racial slurs in the past.

Target said Thursday that it will phase out its Paula Deen-branded cookware and other items, which were sold on its website and in its stores.

"Once the merchandise is sold out, we will not be replenishing inventory," said Molly Snyder, a Target spokeswoman.

Home Depot, which sold Paula Deen-branded cookware and kitchen products only online, said it pulled the products off its website on Wednesday.

Diabetes drug maker Novo Nordisk said Thursday it and Deen have "mutually agreed to suspend our patient education activities for now."

The developments are the latest blow to Deen's business.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc., the world's largest retailer, said Wednesday that it's also cutting ties with Deen. The world's largest retailer currently carries a variety of products under her moniker, including food items,

cookware and health and wellness products, at all of its 4,000 U.S. namesake stores. The retailer began selling her merchandise several years ago. Wal-Mart said it will not place any new orders beyond what's already committed and is working with suppliers to address existing inventories and agreements.

Meanwhile, Paula Deen's name is being stripped from four buffet restaurants owned by Caesars Entertainment. Caesars said Wednesday that its decision to rebrand its restaurants in several U.S. states was a mutual one with Deen.

Last week, the Food Network said that it would not renew the celebrity cook's contract. And on Monday, pork producer Smithfield Foods said it was dropping her as a spokeswoman. Smithfield sold Paula Deen-branded hams in addition to featuring her as a spokeswoman.

Amid the losses, book-buyers are standing by Deen.

As of Thursday morning, "Paula Deen's New Testament: 250 Recipes, All Lightened Up," ranked No. 1 on Amazon.com. The book is scheduled for October. Another Deen book, "Paula Deen's Southern Cooking Bible," was at No. 13. Several other Deen books were out of stock.

Deen appeared in a "Today" show interview Wednesday, dissolving into tears and saying that anyone in the audience who's never said anything they've regretted should pick up a rock and throw it at her head.

The chef, who specializes in Southern comfort food, repeated that she's not a racist.

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AP National Writer Hillel Italie contributed to this report from New York.

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Citation: Target cuts ties with Deen; drugmaker distances (2013, June 27) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-06-ties-deen-drugmaker-distances.html>

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