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Kraft to acquire Balance Bar

State Journal wire services

Continuing its aggressive push into the health foods category, Kraft Foods, of Northfield, Ill., said Friday it would buy nutrition bar maker Balance Bar Co. for \$268 million.

The announcement comes three days after Kraft, the nation's largest food company known for such brands as Jell-O, Post and Oscar Mayer, said it would acquire Boca Burgers, a Chicago maker of soy products.

Kraft, a division of Philip Morris Cos., will pay \$12.40 a share to buy Balance Bar, of Carpinteria, Calif., which had 1999 revenues of \$100 million. Kraft's price is a hefty premium over Balance Bar's closing share price of \$14.12 Thursday. The stock shot up \$5 on Friday to close at \$19.12 on news of the acquisition.

David Owens, Kraft's senior vice president for strategy, said acquiring Boca Burger and Balance Bar allows Kraft to better take advantage of the growing trend toward healthier foods. In October, Kellogg Co. bought Wurthington Foods, a leading maker of vegetarian burgers and other meatless products.

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