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What's News in Markets: A Tasty Pizza, Promising Drug, High Spirit(s)

How did "Emergency Pizza" work out for Domino's? And is there space for a new weight-loss drug? Plus, is Spirit AeroSystems about to land at Boeing hangars? Host Francesca Fontana discusses the biggest stock moves of the week and the news that drove them.

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FULL TRANSCRIPT

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Francesca Fontana: Hey listeners, it's Saturday, March 2nd. I'm Francesca Fontana for The Wall Street Journal. And this is What's News in Markets, our look at the biggest stock moves of the week and the news that drove them. Let's get to it. Happy belated Leap Day, everybody. The bonus day gave the stock market an extra chance to build on February's gains. If we look at the historical probability, it was actually more likely that this year's Leap Day wouldn't end in gains. Both the S&P 500 and the Dow have posted losses on the last three leap days when the markets were open. But not this year. No, this year, all three major indexes ended in the green and the Nasdaq had its first record close in over two years. Plus the S&P and the Nasdaq both had their best Februaries since 2015. Now, check back with me in four years and we'll see if we can keep the Leap Day streak going. Now, my deepest apologies in advance if you're listening to this while hungry, because we are talking pizza stocks, specifically Domino's Pizza. The big takeaway from its quarterly report on Monday was that customers have a growing appetite for Domino's. The company posted a better than expected profit thanks to both strong delivery and carry out sales. And of course,

it's, quote, unquote, Emergency Pizza, the big buy one, get one free promotion where you could earn a whole second pizza. With part of the catch being, you had to join the Domino's Rewards Program. The campaign was a big hit, and the company's CEO said that growing reward signups helped them deliver such strong results. And I've got some numbers for you. The program got 3 million new active members in the fourth quarter to end 2023 with 33 million active members. So Wall Street was pretty pleased with Domino's results and a hike of its quarterly dividends certainly didn't hurt either. The stock jumped nearly 6% on Monday and only gave back some of those gains the rest of the week. And now I'm hungry. See? There was also big news from Viking Therapeutics this week. You might not recognize the name if you're not a big follower of biotech or pharma stocks, but you probably have been hearing about weight loss drugs. I mean, we've all seen the Ozempic commercial, right? So right now, the two big weight loss players are Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk. But Viking emerged as a new competitor when it announced positive study results of its obesity medication. Now, I'm not a scientist, surprise, I know, but basically the mid-stage study showed that Viking's drug helped patients lose up to 14.7% of their weight after 13 weeks of treatment. So it seemed to work more effectively than similar meds from Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk. But keep in mind, Viking will have to replicate the results in another larger study before it can go to market. But still, the results are good news for the drug's prospects. And maybe even better news for Viking's stock. Its shares more than doubled on Tuesday, jumping 121%. With a bonkers move like that, it's not surprising that some of that frenzy faded later in the week, but Viking held onto most of those gains. Now, if/when this new drug enters the market, I want to see if they can come up with a catchier song than Ozempic jingle. And I was going to sing it, but I'm going to spare you all from having it stuck in your head the rest of the day. You're welcome. And let's wrap things up with Spirit. And that's Spirit AeroSystems, the Spirit that makes the bodies of airplanes, not the budget airline. Now, regular listeners, you already know what I'm talking about. It's the Wall Street Journal's Friday report that Boeing is

in talks to buy Spirit. These two have been through the wringer lately, thanks to all the 737 MAX quality issues, and they've done a number on Boeing's stock, which has lost about 20% since that Alaska Airlines incident on January 5th when a door plug blew out mid-flight on a Boeing plane. It's my literal nightmare. But Spirit Stock hasn't been doing too hot either, given that the company has been struggling financially for years. Around this time in 2019, its share price was around a hundred dollars. And before the news Friday morning, it was trading under \$30. So with this deal possibility floating around, how'd the stocks do? Boeing didn't move too much on the news, or maybe that's just compared to Spirit. Boeing's shares ended nearly 2% lower on Friday while Spirit jumped 15%. So maybe there are clearer skies ahead for Spirit. And now you know What's News in Markets this week. You can read about more stocks that moved on the week's news in The Score, my column in The Wall Street Journal's Exchange section. And for what's to come next week, check out WSJ's Take On the Week, wherever you get your podcasts. I'm Francesca Fontana, and have a great weekend and I'll see you next Saturday.