

# Budweiser calls itself America, but will we buy King of Beers as a patriot?



In this photo illustration, A cans of Budweiser, rebranded as 'America,' sit on a table, May 23, 2016, in Washington, DC. As part of an advertising campaign, cans and bottles of Budweiser will be labeled as 'America' instead of 'Budweiser' from now until the November 4th election. (Drew Angerer / Getty Images)



By **Phil Rosenthal**  
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**A**merica is many things to many people. It's a place, an idea, a 1970s band that sang "Sister Golden Hair," to name but a few.

This summer it is a beer.

As you stock up on supplies for the holiday weekend, you may notice America on shelves where Budweiser typically sits.

The red, white and blue cans still look a lot like Bud despite the temporary name change. The beer itself

is no different than it was when branded Budweiser.

Call it Budweiser. Call it America. It's still a product of the conglomerate with headquarters in Belgium and Brazil, [AB InBev](#), which swallowed up St. Louis' Anheuser-Busch eight years ago.

Some marketers might have hesitated, worrying a move such as this was crass or cynical or just a wee bit over the top. But with nationalistic fervor at least simmering in America (as in the United States of) this election year, there's a certain logic in running America (the lager) up the flagpole to see who salutes.

Budweiser will be America through the election in November. Phrases such as "land of the free, home of the brave," "e pluribus unum" and "from the redwood forest to the gulf stream waters" will also be used on labels to drive home the connection.

Another line said to be employed will be "indivisible since 1776," which glosses over the 1860s, to say the least. But, to be fair, this is a Belgian-Brazilian company and this is a beer, not a history class.

Budweiser, a brand name derived from 13th-century Bohemia and subject of trademark fights with European brewers, has liked to call itself the King of Beers. This country established itself by rebelling against the very idea of a king. Start pulling on that thread and this whole America thing threatens to unravel.

Attempting to tie a brand to patriotism is hardly unique, however, especially this time of year.

Coca-Cola, for one, has its own limited edition red, white and blue cans heading into the Independence Day holiday.

With the song lyric, "I'm proud to be an American," on them, the cans mark Coke's 75-year association with the United Service Organization, which provides programs, services and entertainment to members of the U.S. armed forces and their families.

Even without borrowing stars and stripes, Coca-Cola is seen by consumers as one of this country's most patriotic brands, according to the latest annual survey from Brand Keys, a New York-based brand loyalty and emotional engagement consultancy.

Jeep held on to its customary top spot, sharing No. 1 with Disney in results drawn from 4,750 consumers and released this week. Levi Strauss came next, followed by Ralph Lauren, Ford, Coca-Cola, Jack Daniels, Harley-Davidson, Apple, Coors, Sam Adams, Gatorade and Amazon.

"When it comes to engaging consumers, waving an American flag and having an authentic foundation for being able to wave the flag are entirely different things, and the consumer knows it," Robert Passikoff, Brand Keys' founder and president, said in announcing the survey results. "More importantly,

believability and authenticity are key to emotional engagement."

Budweiser didn't make the top 50 on Brand Keys' list.

Samuel Adams beer, which tied for 10th with Coors and Apple, benefits from being named for an actual patriot, who helped stir up colonists to revolt against England. But Jim Koch, founder and CEO of parent Boston Beer, recalled his signature brew nearly was named something else.

An ad agency, believe it or not, suggested Sacred Cod. Koch said he seriously considered New World because it was the name of the first clipper ship built in Boston. "I wanted an assertively American name, and it just felt right. It wasn't a fake European beer," he said.

Ultimately, however, Samuel Adams won out. "He created a political revolution that led to American political independence," Koch said. "I wanted to create a beer revolution that led to American beer independence."

The United States borrowed the tune of the official song of an 18th-century London men's club, "To Anacreon in Heaven," for its national anthem. If "The Star-Spangled Banner" can be swaddled in a reputed after-dinner drinking song, little wonder a beer would feel it can wrap itself in the flag.

Renaming Budweiser does raise the possibility that someone somewhere will be pulled over by police and protest that it should not be a crime to love America and enjoy it too much.

There was a time not so long ago when the people behind Budweiser would have thought Budweiser alone symbolized America, making it unnecessary to slap on a new name.

But apparently the days that when you said Budweiser, you said it all, are history.

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