



Ben & Jerry's takes heat for ice cream beer

Bruce Horovitz, April 16, 2015

No, Ben & Jerry's isn't making a beer-flavored ice-cream. Or, for that matter, a marijuana-flavored ice cream.

But it is taking some heat for plans to put its kid-friendly name -- and image -- on a craft beer.

The Burlington, VT ice-cream specialist, known for its often-wacky flavor combinations, announced Thursday that it plans to create a craft beer dubbed *Salted Caramel Brownie Brown Ale*, with Fort Collins, CO-based New Belgium Brewing. The brew is tentatively scheduled to hit the market in fall, 2015.

"Our fans can expect something both delicious and impactful," said Jay Curley, senior global marketing manager, in a statement.

But the marketplace impact may be quite different than what Ben & Jerry's, which is owned by Unilever, intended. Although the move comes at a time when the craft beer market is exploding, there is parallel national movement to protect children from being marketed to -- or influenced by -- makers of adult-focused products like tobacco and alcoholic beverages. Some wonder if Ben & Jerry's, a progressive chain that has long stood up for important social and environmental issues, has crossed a line.



"It's a crass, corporate greedy move to put a brand name like Ben & Jerry's on a beer," says Bruce Lee Livingston, executive director and CEO of Alcohol Justice, an alcohol industry watchdog consumer group. "It's bad for children -- who will start looking at beer as the next step after ice cream."

Executives from Ben & Jerry's did not immediately respond to phone and email requests for comment on the criticism. But a press release from both companies about the "Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream-inspired beer" says "the two like-minded businesses have long championed similar causes such as minimizing carbon pollution and supporting sustainable agriculture. This project will focus on environment awareness as well."

Last month, Ben & Jerry's co-founder Ben Cohen said, in an interview with HuffPost Live, that he has consider the possibility of a marijuana-infused ice cream.

Even then, the move is unusual for Ben & Jerry's, a social-justice-focused company whose three-part mission statement emphasizes product quality, economic reward and community commitment.

"This is a troubling development," said Livingston, of the Ben & Jerry's beer. "It does no favors for the youth of America."