

An open letter to my favorite beer maker

TO: Mr. Kevin Kotecki, President, Pabst Brewing Co.

FROM: R.J. Beatty

SUBJECT: Schlitz beer

Dear Mr. Kotecki:

You don't know me. I've just a guy from North Carolina, working hard, walking tall. I've been a loyal supporter of your company's products for years now — mostly, a very satisfied supporter. It's with great regret, therefore, that I'm forced to write today to accuse the Pabst Brewing Co. of engaging in un-American activities.

I'm talking about what's happened to Schlitz beer.

Let me explain. For 10 years Schlitz — the lager in the red-and-white can, not the big-bottle-with-a-blue-bull nastiness — has been my beer of choice. The Bud and Miller drinkers around looked down their nose at me, but I didn't care; I dug the distinctive flavor. For years I talked up The Beer That Made Milwaukee Famous to everyone I could; my wife grew to prefer it, as well. You could almost say Schlitz was part of the family.

Taste aside, it had a no-frills, workingman ethos about it. Where I lived, Schlitz came only in cans, held together by the old-school plastic six-pack ring — easy to grab, easy to toss to a buddy on a hot summer day. And at \$3.49 a sixer, the price was right.

Then one day, suddenly the corner store wasn't selling Schlitz anymore. I searched other stores, with equally futile results. With no explanation, my old reliable Schlitz had vanished from the face of the earth ... or at least, from central North Carolina.

Still with me, Mr. Kotecki? Wait for it ...

Months later I'm at the grocery store, and lo and behold, Schlitz was back in the cooler. Except a few things were different. No longer in cans, now the beer came in *bottles*, with a revamped label boasting a "Classic '60s formula." And the price had gone from \$3.49 way up to \$5.99 for a sixer — a whopping \$9.69 for a 12-pack.

Obviously, we have different goals here. Yours is running a profitable company; mine is drinking beer. According to your website, Schlitz has a long history in this country and was once renowned for its distinctive taste — a formula that got lost somewhere along the way, but was reformulated in 2007 and has been slowly regaining favor ever since. So it's natural you'd want to emphasize the "Classic '60s formula" marketing campaign, and get back even more of those beer drinkers you used to have.

Well, I wasn't around in the '60s, but I've been drinking your beer for awhile, including since 2007, when the formula allegedly made its comeback. I bought a 12-pack of bottled Schlitz that night; and I can state with complete sincerity, sir, that this new gentrified brew isn't some high-falutin' Yuengling wannabe. It's the same old Schlitz. And I ain't the kind of sucker who pays extra for packaging.

Times are hard, sir. Folks are out of work, I'm paying \$3.50 a gallon for gas just to get to work, and now that same \$3.50 won't even get me a sixer of Schlitz to enjoy when I get home. Now, instead of folks turning up their noses when I crack open a Schlitz, it's

the little lady who sniffs at the PBR I buy instead. Who are you, to make my home life any tougher in these turbulent times? That's just plain un-American.

This note won't do much good, but you needed to know of my disappointment here. A man might lose his job, his car might break down, his woman may leave and his dog may die. But when he gets home at the end of the day, he has a right to expect his favorite beer will be there, in its old reliable can.

I'm so annoyed, I've half a mind to write a country song about the whole deal.

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