

# ...Union-made beer

From Page 1

employers, but to support union workers — and to use our buying power to send a market signal favoring “high-road” enterprises. The expectation is that union-made goods are made by workers who are paid fair wages and benefits, and have rights and dignity on the job. Production workers at the Anheuser-Busch brewery in St. Louis, Missouri, for example, get \$31.94 an hour under their union contract, plus health and pension benefits, paid vacation and sick days, and two free cases of beer per month.

Today’s U.S. beer industry is dominated by two unionized or mostly-unionized giants, with hundreds of almost-totally-nonunion craft brew competitors nipping at their heels.

The giants are responding to the craft threat by buying up craft competitors, and by developing in-house varieties known as “crafty” beers. AB Inbev has acquired 10 regional craft beer companies in the last six years, grouping them in its “High End” division. Molson Coors groups its half-dozen craft acquisitions in its “Tenth and Blake” division. In each case, the craft acquisitions came with nonunion production facilities that continue to produce the brands they produced prior to purchase. So by and large, craft beers owned by the big unionized companies are still produced nonunion.

Beer company ownership structures can get pretty complicated. In 2015, the world’s biggest beer company, AB Inbev, announced a deal to buy the world’s second biggest beer company, SAB Miller, for \$107 billion. The U.S. Department of Justice — responsible for enforcing the “antitrust” laws that are supposed to prevent monopoly — approved the merger, but on condition that AB Inbev sell U.S. rights to the SAB Miller brands to another company. That was achieved when Molson Coors paid \$12 billion for SAB Miller’s stake in their joint venture, MillerCoors.

## AB Inbev

AB Inbev is the world’s biggest beer company. The AB stands for Anheuser Busch, but today it’s a foreign-owned corporation headquartered in Leuven, Belgium and Sao Paulo, Brazil. In the United States, AB Inbev owns 12 “mega-breweries,” all



A century ago, union-made beer carried a union-made label.

of which are union-represented by the Teamsters. Those 12 breweries are responsible for producing all of the company’s nationally-distributed mass-market beers. That means all varieties of the following brands purchased anywhere in the United States were made by union members at these 12 breweries: Budweiser, Busch, Michelob, Natural Light, Rolling Rock, and Shock Top. The 12 breweries also produce several of AB Inbev’s “foreign” beer labels for the U.S. domestic market — Beck’s, and Foster’s. And it has a contract with a Japanese beermaker to produce Kirin for the U.S. market.

## Molson Coors

Of the seven megabreweries Molson Coors now owns outright, five are union-represented and two are nonunion. Workers at its breweries in Irwindale, California, and Fort Worth, Texas, are represented by the Teamsters. At its Trenton, Ohio, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, breweries, workers are represented by United Auto Workers (UAW). And at its Albany, Georgia, brewery, workers are represented by International Association of Machinists. Its Golden, Colorado, and Elkton, Virginia, breweries are nonunion. Altogether, Molson Coors employs about 2,400 union members — about 28 percent of its U.S. employees. But the fact that some plants are union and some nonunion makes it very tough to know whether the beer you see in a grocery store or bar is union-made. Blue Moon Belgium White is produced *only* at the two nonunion plants, and Killian’s Irish Red is produced only at the nonunion Golden plant. But all seven Molson Coors breweries produce Miller Lite and Miller High Life, while all but the Milwaukee and Trenton plants produce Coors Light. Hamm’s is produced by one nonunion plant and three union plants. One helpful fact for those

willing to look: Bottles of union-made Miller beer do say “UNION MADE” in fine print.

## Pabst

Among the big beer companies, Pabst occupies a unique place: It’s a beer company that contracts out the making of its own beer. For the most part, Pabst beers are brewed under contract by Molson Coors, but since two of the seven Molson Coors breweries are nonunion, the same uncertainty applies to Pabst-owned beers that applies to Molson Coors beers. A Pabst spokesperson told the Labor Press “many” of Pabst’s beers are made by union workers, but provided no real specifics. A spokesperson for Molson Coors said confidentiality provisions in its contract brewing agreements prevent the company from publicizing which brands they produce or which breweries they utilize.

## Lagunitas

Craft brewer Lagunitas — a wholly owned subsidiary of Heineken as of May 2017 — is unionized at its Chicago brewery, which employs 95 members of Teamsters Local 727. Their 10-year first-time union contract runs through April 2024 and specifies wages from \$10 to \$32 an hour, health benefits, a 401(k), and workplace rights. But Lagunitas’ Petaluma, California, brewery, which produces for the Western region, is nonunion.

## Mendocino Brewing

Mendocino Brewing Co. makes Butte Creek organic beers and Talon Double IPA. Fourteen workers at it Ukiah, California, plant are represented by Teamsters Local 896 in a contract that runs through July 31, 2018. But its beers are also made at a nonunion facility in Saratoga, New York. It’s owned by an Indian businessman who lives in the U.K.

## Genesee Brewing

Workers at the Genesee Brewing plant in Rochester, New York, are represented by Teamsters Local 118. Genesee is a subsidiary of North American Breweries, which is owned by FIFCO Florida Ice and Farm Company S.A., a Costa Rican food and beverage company.

## ‘UNION MADE’

### AB INBEV

BECK’S  
BUD LIGHT  
BUDWEISER  
BUSCH  
FOSTER’S  
MICHELOB  
NATURAL LIGHT  
O’DOULS  
ROLLING ROCK  
SHOCK TOP

### KIRIN



## ‘UNION MAYBE’

### MOLSON COORS

COORS BANQUET  
COORS LIGHT  
EXTRA GOLD LAGER  
HAMM’S  
ICEHOUSE  
KEYSTONE ICE  
KEYSTONE LIGHT  
LEINENKUGEL’S  
MILLER GENUINE DRAFT  
MILLER LITE  
MILLER HIGH LIFE  
MILLER 64  
MILWAUKEE’S BEST

### PABST BEERS

PABST BLUE RIBBON  
RAINIER  
OLYMPIA  
COLT 45  
OLD MILWAUKEE  
SCHLITZ

### LAGUNITAS

LAGUNITAS IPA  
LAGUNITAS IMPERIAL STOUT

### MENDOCINO BREWING

BUTTE CREEK ORGANIC  
RED TAIL AMBER ALE

### GENESEE BREWING

GENESEE

