

Global Brewing Corporations

This is the preface for the Global Breweries section in the original Beer Demystifier e-book (with some modifications)

“Global brewing corporations” can be defined as large international breweries, usually owning operations in more than one country. These vary from companies which are firmly dedicated to brewing quality beer (such as Duvel-Moortgat) to giant corporate behemoths. There are two types of the latter breed: those which churn out cheap light lager brands for the lowest common denominator of drinker (such as Anheuser-Busch*, SABMiller, and Molson-Coors), and those which mass-produce more expensive brands of varying quality which often ride on hype and so-called ‘trendiness’ (such as InBev* and, to an extent, Diageo).

(* Pre-merger strategy – now Anheuser-Busch InBev encompasses both depending on the brand.)

World domination through standardization, brand rationalization, and the resultant economies of scale is the general underlying goal for many giant global brewing corporations. On varying levels, these giants often put profit and shareholders’ wealth over taste, diversity, tradition, craftsmanship, and the health of the local economy.

I’m not saying all the companies listed on these revealing pages should be labeled as extreme one-track-minded arch-capitalists bent on world market domination policies. Some, including the allied German and Baltic operations of combined corporations, have respect for traditional styles native to certain areas and therefore are worthy of praise by not always acting like Godzilla after a night on the town. And at least one respected Belgian regional brewer has ended up being classed as a global brewer as it brews at sites on both sides of the Atlantic. However, certain large brewing corporations are truly greedy and spectacularly voracious – the biggest players on the global swill scene do tend to look like monsters with alarming regularity for a variety of reasons. An important point I would like to raise is that the more we, the people, feed our beer money to such monsters, the more they will be able to grow at the expense of small, craft brewers.

Television adverts and billboard proclamations are forever bombarding our sensory perceptions, telling us a cold-brewed (whatever that is), opposite-sex-attracting, hip-to-be-seen-drinking, mass-produced light lager is the way to go. Try thinking a little deeper than their shallow and brainless advertising gimmicks. The heart of the craft brewing industry prides itself in maintaining (or, initially, reintroducing) diversity and quality, and needs to be supported.

Look what the ever-merging, ever-spreading giant brewing corporations have foisted on us in comparison with the days before these giants existed. Fresh, local beer brewed with skill and pride was widespread – Brooklyn alone once boasted 43 small breweries for the local market. These breweries

were founded by immigrants from a diverse selection of countries who brought their craft brewing skills and recipes over to these shores, and sought to recreate the finest beers found in their native areas.

The nightmare of Prohibition killed off most of these, and when it was repealed the industry had to be rebuilt quickly to meet demand. That's when the strongest brewing companies rose up, specializing in cheap-to-make, fast-to-get-out pale lagers. Brewing skills had largely been forgotten with many regionalized European recipes – these had to wait until the birth of the fledgling craft beer movement after homebrewing was legalized by President Carter about thirty years ago.

A long series of big brewery mergers and acquisitions through the decades (which actually started long before Prohibition) meant that big brewers were constantly getting bigger, and the diversity of their portfolios getting smaller. This continues unchecked to this day, just look at how worryingly massive InBev became in the last few years. Already bloated on the meal of countless regional breweries around the world, InBev recently swallowed up America's biggest brewer, Anheuser-Busch, creating a [monster](#) of unimaginable proportions towering over the world's beer industry.

A dirty trick from two different global giants has been to introduce brands which appear to be from a fictitious craft brewery. In true wolf-in-sheep's-clothing-style, bottles, packaging, and tap handles never bear the name of the giant but instead use various pseudo-brewery names to trick unknowing craft ale drinkers. These loathsome creations are generally known as 'stealth-micro brands' and, using the corporation's streamlined sales and distribution techniques already in place, end up taking away valuable tap lines in bars and shelf space in stores. Such brands are fledgling cuckoos being illegitimately nurtured in alien nests. Wherever these 'stealth micros' surface, it always means lost opportunities for true craft brewers - and lost opportunities for finding craft beer over corporate beer.

Personally, I never choose any 'stealth micros' (together with their mainly swill stablemates) – they are parasitical to the true craft beer movement. Remember, each bottle or pint of a 'stealth micro' beer which is purchased by a craft beer drinker is a lost sale for a genuine microbrewer. See the entries for [Anheuser-Busch InBev](#) and [Molson-Coors](#) to learn which brands could potentially dupe you into supporting a global corporation.

Question: Which of these are brewed by small, independently run craft brewers?



Answer: NONE OF THEM!

**Be a local hero by supporting local craft brewers,
not giant global mass-producing corporations!**

CHEAP, MASS-PRODUCED BEER =
CHEAP, MASS-PRODUCED TASTE.
DON'T YOU DESERVE BETTER?

THE GOTHAM
IMBIBER
New York City's Online
Grassroots Beer Resource
www.gotham-imbiber.com

This page was written by Alex Hall in 2007, and is updated to August 2009.

**Join the craft beer revolution.
You'll enjoy it.**