

Buy American Mention of the Week

Kicking Heinz Ketchup to the curb

By Roger Simmermaker

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Friday, February 15th was a sad day for a ketchup-lover like me after hearing the report that American-owned Heinz was going to be jointly bought out by Warren Buffet's Berkshire Hathaway and Brazilian-backed private-equity firm 3G Capital. To be fair, Warren Buffett will own 50 percent of the company, so Heinz could still technically be an American-owned company with promises to keep the headquarters in Pittsburgh, but the control and operations of Heinz will now be in the hands of Brazilian billionaires who are out to make a buck on what used to be an iconic all-American brand.

You see, I'm the type of guy that loves ketchup, and one that is familiar with the frequent joke that goes like this: "Would you like some fries with your ketchup?" And I've always been the type to never buy any other ketchup than Heinz. In fact, my wife recently brought home some Hunt's ketchup from Dollar Tree (you would be amazed what is American-made at Dollar Tree stores), which I promptly refused and vowed to take back to the store for a refund. I suppose we'll now keep it and I will learn to love Hunt's.

The ownership of 3G Capital is composed of Brazilian billionaires Jorge Paulo Lemann, Marcel Herrmann Telles, and Carlos Alberto Sicupira. All three billionaires have a controlling stake of Anheuser Busch Inbev too, which is the Belgium-Brazilian parent of formerly American-owned Anheuser-Busch.

3G Capital bought Burger King in 2010, and now they're teaming up with Warren Buffet to buy Heinz. But Heinz is more than just about Ketchup, of course. It's a huge company that owns such brands as Ore-Ida, Bagel Bites, and Lea & Perrins. Then there's Heinz 57 sauce, Heinz mustard, Heinz pickles, Heinz pickle relish, and Heinz mayonnaise.

If you've been buying Heinz mayonnaise and want to stay with an American brand now that Heinz will be 50 percent foreign owned, I would suggest Plochman's, Gulden's, or Grey Poupon. Now I know that Grey Poupon sounds foreign, but it is actually American made and American owned. French's mustard, on the other hand, sounds like a foreign brand and is a foreign brand, but it isn't owned by the French. It's owned by the British.

If you've been buying Heinz mayonnaise, you can still buy a more American choice if you buy Kraft mayonnaise. Hellmann's and Best Foods mayonnaise brands are both owned by a company called Unilever. Have you ever seen Lever 2000 soap? It's the same company. Unilever (Lever Bros. is the U.S. subsidiary) is a joint venture between England and The Netherlands. It's a huge company that also owns Ragu pasta sauce, Lipton (teas and soups), Lux soap, Surf laundry detergent, Knorr soups, Ben & Jerry's ice cream, Klondike ice cream sandwiches, Country Crock margarine, Wish-Bone salad dressing, Popsicle frozen treats, and I Can't Believe it's Not Butter (which many people tell me they can't believe is not American after I tell them it is foreign owned).

Many Unilever products are made in America (as is British-owned French's mustard), but the point is that the profits from these purchases go overseas to reward foreign investors, foreign owners, and foreign stockholders. The taxes on those profits are paid to the foreign treasuries of foreign governments. That's great information to know when you realize that we need to keep more than just jobs in America. We also need to keep profits and tax revenue within our national borders as well.

If you've been buying Heinz pickles or pickle relish, I would suggest American-owned and American-made alternatives like Mt. Olive, Claussen, and Vlasic.

The point in re-directing our consumer dollars away from Heinz to all-American companies instead is not necessarily for the purposes of a boycott. Heinz is far too big and far too popular to be hit substantially in the pocketbook for allowing itself to be swallowed up by a foreign entity, even if only to the tune of 50 percent. In good conscious, I can't support that with my American consumer dollars. I would rather support a smaller American-owned company that makes its products in the USA. Wouldn't you?

Kicking Heinz ketchup out of my kitchen cupboards is a major deal for me since I put ketchup on just about every kind of potato you can think of whether it's French fries, tater tots, or hash browns. But I'm willing to do it because I know that it's best for the U.S. economy.

My most frequent response when people ask me if there is a foreign brand in my life that I can't give up was to say "If Heinz ever got bought out by a foreign company, I don't know what I would do." Now that that time has come, all I have to do is figure out whether I like Hunt's ketchup or Del Monte ketchup better. I already buy Mt. Olive pickles and pickle relish, Kraft mayonnaise, and both Plochman's and Grey Poupon mustards.

If you can't give up your Heinz ketchup, I can relate to that. But why not consider changing from Heinz to a different type of mayonnaise, mustard, or pickle relish since these are foods where Heinz has a less-distinctive taste. Buying American has always been about doing what we can where we can. Every purchase produces paychecks. By buying American made *and* American owned, we can ensure that more of those paychecks go to We the People.

Roger Simmermaker is the author of *How Americans Can Buy American* and *My Company 'Tis of Thee: 50 Patriotic American Companies American Consumers Should Know About*, and writes "Buy American Mention of the Week" articles for wnd.com and his website www.howtobuyamerican.com. Roger has a degree in Electronics Engineering Technology, is president of his local Machinists Union, has been a frequent guest on Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC, and has been quoted in *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, and *Business Week* among many other publications.