



## Mountain Dew to roll out craft DEWshine

Bruce Horowitz, USA TODAY March 12, 2015

Even Mountain Dew is going craft -- and taking some early grief for it.

The high-caffeinated soft drink, ultra-popular with teens and Millennials, is about to roll out a new version sold in longneck bottles that some critics say look like craft beers.

When Mtn Dew DEWshine hits shelves March 23, a single-serve will sell for \$1 to \$1.49 and a four-pack will sell for \$3.99. It's a clear citrus Dew made with real sugar, "inspired by the brand's roots in the backwoods of Tennessee," says Jennifer Ryan, a Mountain Dew spokeswoman.

But the bottle may be getting as much buzz as its contents.

The move comes at a time all things craft seem to be white-hot. Besides craft beers, there's craft pizza, craft popcorn and even craft beef jerky. Even though the product isn't available yet, it's already being criticized by some who say PepsiCo is trying to make it extra-appealing to young folks by putting it in a longneck bottle and packaging it like a craft beer.

**"The line between alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages is intentionally being blurred by producers of both," says Michael Scippa, director of public affairs at the advocacy group Alcohol Justice. "Producers of high sugar content and high alcohol content beverages grow their markets by appealing to young people."**

But Ryan says, in an email, that the bottle shape is very common. "Consistent with other premium soft drink brands, Mtn Dew DEWshine is packaged in a standard glass bottle. And, we've used this bottle for Mountain Dew in the past."



In the soft drink business, longneck bottles are simply a recognized symbol for "premium," says John Sicher, publisher of **Beverage Digest**, the trade magazine. "I don't believe PepsiCo will try to market this to look like beer. That makes no sense, and they are too smart to do that."

**But Scippa says that things like the longneck bottles "work subliminally" to attract youngsters.**

Because craft beers have had such a big impact on the beer market, says Sicher, it's no surprise that craft products "may be about to emerge in the soda category." Coca-Cola, he notes, recently named an executive to manage craft beverages. For Mountain Dew, DEWshine is the brand's second craft offering. Last year it introduced Caleb's Kola, made with Fair Trade cane sugar and kola nuts from Africa.

Craft branding for products of any kind is on-trend with Millennials, says Irma Zandl, a cultural trends expert. "Craft beers are extremely popular, but I haven't seen craft sodas get the same kind of traction."

Mountain Dew still has room to grow. It ranks as the nation's fourth-largest soda brand, and over the past decade it's market share has grown from 6.3 to 6.9, says Sicher. Although its volume has declined slightly during that period, it has out-performed the industry, says Sicher.

Although Zandl, the youth consultant, says she likes the "Whole Foods vibe" to the new beverage, overall, she says, "it strikes me as being a short-lived novelty."