

Cheap beer in vogue among marketers

By Duane D. Stanford, Bloomberg

Joe Six-Pack is getting some love again.

MillerCoors LLC and Anheuser-Busch InBev NV, after years of focusing on craft ales, ciders and imports, are paying more attention to the working man's drink of choice: cheap beer. The two brewers, which account for three-quarters of the U.S. beer industry, will boost marketing this year for economy brands such as Keystone Light and Busch Light.

During the televised Nascar race on March 2, MillerCoors will begin airing the first national advertising for Keystone Light since 2011. A similar campaign for Miller High Life, which calls itself the "champagne of beers," starts in April. AB InBev will expand its marketing for Busch to year-round and has introduced a fuller flavored version called Busch Signature Copper Lager.

As persistent unemployment after the recession left blue-collar workers with less money for beer, brewers shifted resources to higher-margin brands such as MillerCoors's Blue Moon and Leuven, Belgium-based AB InBev's Bud Light Lime. As the economy rebounds, companies are racing to win with a crowd that is among the most loyal and thirsty of beer drinkers.

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