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British Brewery Mocks Putin With 'Anti-Gay' Beer

By Andrew McChesney

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BrewDog co-founder James Watt preparing to mail a case of Hello My Name Is Vladimir beer to Putin.

President Vladimir Putin can expect to receive a case of Scottish beer bearing his name and image soon — but it's doubtful that he'll want to chug down a bottle.

The beer is called Hello My Name Is Vladimir and features a garish Andy Warhol-style image of Putin wearing eye shadow and lipstick. Text on the label reads, "Not for gays" and suggests that the ale "may contain traces of sarcasm."

The beverage, launched Tuesday, is the world's first protest beer and is meant to mock Russia's anti-gay law ahead of the opening of the Winter Olympics in Sochi this week, Scottish craft brewer BrewDog said.

"We just wanted to stand up for what we believe in, and with Hello My Name is Vladimir we're holding a mirror up to discriminatory legislation signed off by Mr. Putin," BrewDog co-

founder James Watt said by e-mail. "We love Russia, but we're just not fans of anyone saying what you can and can't say — as you can tell we're pretty supportive of freedom of expression."



The beer, launched Tuesday, is meant to mock Russia's anti-gay law ahead of the opening of the Winter Olympics in Sochi. (photo: BrewDog)

BrewDog, which says its mission is to "upend the status quo in whatever form it occurs," mailed a case of the limited edition beer to Putin himself and on Tuesday started to offer it at bars in British cities, Stockholm and Sao Paulo, as well as over its website. The beer retails for £2.89 ($4.70) per bottle, with 50 percent of profits going to gay-supportive charities.

The brew contains Limonnik berries, an ingredient mixed in Russian tea and regarded by some Russian hunters as a way to enhance sexual performance in men, BrewDog said.

The choice of the berries appears to be a nod to the macho image that Putin has cultivated by, among other things, being photographed swimming, fishing and riding barechested on horseback in Siberia.

"We sincerely hope that when Vladimir Putin is tired from a busy day riding horses with his top off, grappling with burly men on the judo mat or fishing in his Speedos, he reclines on a velvet chaise longue and has one of his handsome helpers wet his whistle with a glass of Hello My Name is Vladimir," Watt said in an online statement.



BrewDog's founders saluting Putin with a bottle of what they are billing as the world's first protest beer. (photo: BrewDog)

Russia's gay propaganda law, which makes it illegal to "promote" homosexuality to minors, has prompted a wave of international criticism since Putin signed it into law in June and at times threatened to overshadow the Olympic Games, which open Friday. Opponents say the law has led to an increase in discrimination and even physical attacks against gays. Supporters say Russia needs to protect its young from "immoral" Western values.

Watt, speaking by e-mail, said he had no plans to attend the Olympics in Sochi. "We'll be busy brewing beer, but as we're Scottish we're a dab hand at curling," he said.

BrewDog, founded in 2007, has a history of needling the establishment. In 2012, it launched Never Mind the Anabolics, a beer laced with steroids that mocked Heineken's sponsorship of the Summer Olympic Games in London.

Hello My Name is Vladimir is the fifth beer in the "Hello My Name is ..." series, following the release in July of Hello My Name is Mette Marit, a Norwegian-inspired drink flavored with the country's native Lingonberries. Norway banned the beer for using the name of the Crown Prince Haakon's new girlfriend, a single mother rumored to have a scandalous past, BrewDog said.

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