

Maker's Mark Meltdown

by Ashley Azpiazu

Maker's Mark, a bourbon brand known for its red-wax seal and square-shaped bottle, took its loyal customers on an emotional rollercoaster over the span of one week.

On Feb. 10, Rob Samuels, chief operating officer, announced on its website the company would be producing a diluted version of its bourbon in order to keep up with growing demand and shrinking supply. Samuels guaranteed customers the bourbon would taste exactly the same, even though the alcohol content would be reduced by three percent.

Despite assurances the flavor profile would remain intact, many loyal customers of the Maker's Mark brand were outraged. Angry bourbon enthusiasts voiced their concern with Maker's Mark through phone calls, e-mails and social media comments.

A mere week after the original announcement, Maker's Mark decided to reverse their decision to dilute its signature bourbon. In an online statement Rob Samuels and Bill Samuels Jr. said, "We're humbled by your overwhelming response and passion for Maker's Mark. While we thought we were doing what's right, this is your brand - and you told us in large numbers to change our decision."

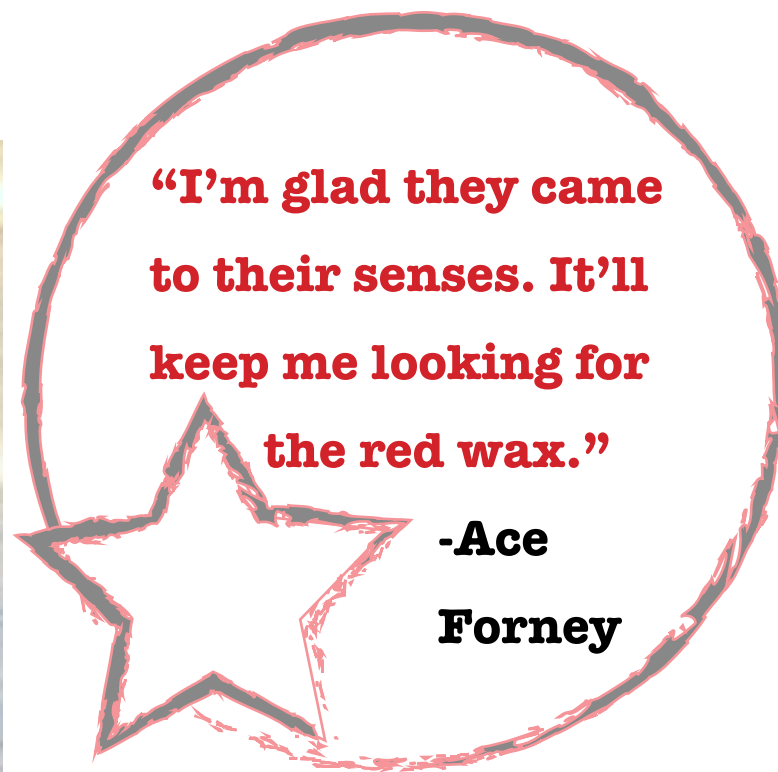
Consumer Reactions

Among those upset by the brand's decision was Ace Forney, Gainesville, Fla.



Forney said he takes his bourbon very seriously because he grew up in Kentucky. As a loyal Maker's Mark customer, Forney said he was shocked when his best friend called him last week to share the news.

"It was hard to believe that a company that prides itself on such high standards was willing to compromise their product due to the demand that was caused by that quality," Forney said. "I'm glad they came to their senses. It'll keep me looking for the red wax."



A Gainesville Bonefish bartender, Brittany Lovvorn, said she is also glad the company decided to reverse their decision to change their recipe.

"Two of my favorite regulars where extremely upset when they first heard the news," Lovvorn said.

She said the couple regularly orders Maker's Mark manhattans, sweet and up.

"They love the taste of Maker's so much they don't even have me chill the drink, they preffer it undilluted and at room tempera-ture," Lovvorn said.

Differences in Recipes

Based soley on the reactions of loyal Maker's Mark customers, one would suspect that the rejected recipe was durastically different from the original.

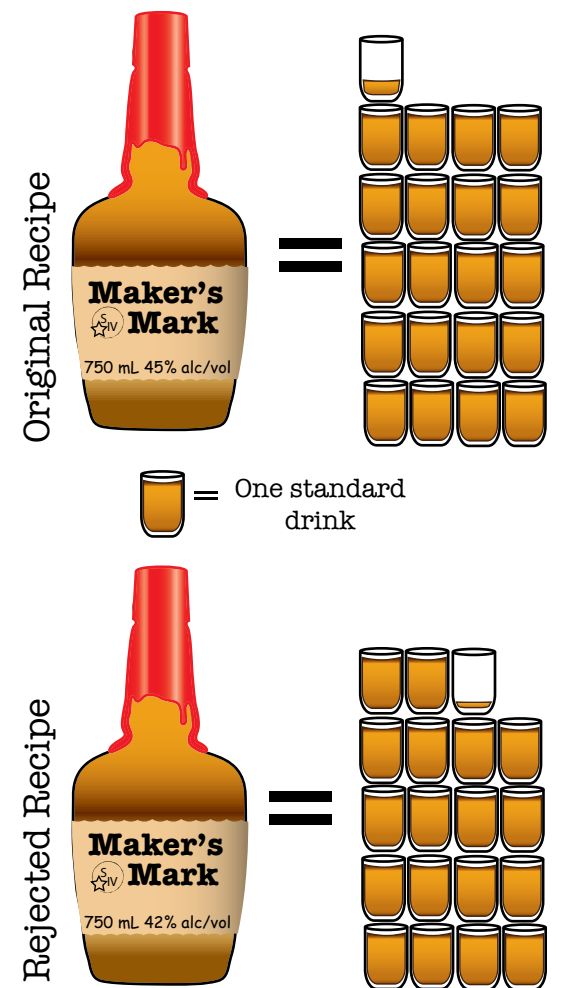
In reality, the difference between the two recipes in terms of alcohol strength are very small. The original recipe is 90 proof, which equates to 45 percent alcohol by

volume. The watered-down recipe would have been 84 proof, which would be 42 per-cent alcohol by volume.

This slight reduction in strength wouldn't have had a large effect on the number of standard drinks per bottle. A 750 mL bottle of the original 90-proof bour-bon equates to 20.28 standard drinks, while a 750 mL bottle of the reject recipe would equal 18.11 standard drinks. Roughly the difference of two standard drinks per bottle.

Regardless of the small differences, Maker's lovers banded together to fight for their original recipe they love. And they won.

Drinks Per Recipe



Source: Drink Conversion by the University of Virginia