

Buy American Mention of the Week

An Old Country Store with old-fashioned values

By Roger Simmermaker

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Whenever you walk into a Cracker Barrel Old Country Store restaurant, the first thing you'll run into is the "Made in USA" display of all American-made products. And when I say it's the first thing you'll "run into" I mean that literally, because once you pass through the entrance doors, if you keep going straight, you will actually run right into this display of all American-made products.

Part of the motivation behind Cracker Barrel's decision to have a made-in-USA-only section in its Old Country Store was because consumers and patrons kept "running into" souvenirs, gifts, trinkets, keepsakes, and knick-knacks made in other countries, *and they made sure that the management knew that they were unhappy about it.* Among the store managers I talked to, the consensus was that the company simply felt it just wasn't right to offer so many products with the American flag or other American symbols on them that weren't made in America. And I'm pretty sure that most conscientious and concerned Americans would agree. I know that I do!

Browsing through the patriotic-theme products of Cracker Barrel's Old Country Store, patriotic Americans can't help but get the feeling that they've walked into the right place. And if they're Americans who express their patriotism through their consumer purchases, Americans who like to vote with their wallets, checkbooks, and credit cards every day and not just on Election Day, then Cracker Barrel's Old Country Store really is a dream come true.

Among the terrific variety of patriotic-theme products Cracker Barrel carries in their "Made in USA" section, you'll find:

- United We Stand and USA baseball caps
- USA polo shirts in various color designs with patriotic design collars
- Ladies summer dress in patriotic colors (one of their best sellers, I'm told)
- Land of the Free, Home of the Brave t-shirt
- Rocking chair cushion set
- 100% cotton Patriotic Flag Kit
- USA Flag pin and U.S. Angel pin (yes, you can buy American flag pins made in the USA)
- Made in America aprons and kitchen towels
- United States Constitution and Declaration of Independence scrolls

- American Pride and Freedom is Not Free, But Worth Fighting For coffee mugs
- Americana candles by Woodwick
- Lodge Logic cast iron pans
- Patriotic wall hangings
- Red, White, and Blue Charms Blow Pops (and other candies)
- Slinky Spinwheels (I just put two of these in my front garden!)
- U.S. Constitution and United States jigsaw puzzles
- *Don't Forget, God Bless Our Troops* (book) and *100 American Flags* (book)
- The U.S. Constitution and Declaration of Independence (booklet)
- Made in America jewelry (my wife just loves her new patriotic earrings from Cracker Barrel!)

You can also shop online at crackerbarrel.com, where the American-made items in the *Patriotic Collection* part of the online store are noted by clicking the *Details* tab when the product you are interested in is displayed.

If you're sitting on the front porch of the Old Country Store, relaxing while rocking in the Official Military Rockers that line the restaurant's gracious porch, you might notice that even they are made in USA (other rocking chairs on the porch are assembled in USA, which means that they can contain parts that are not from domestic sources).

In many ways, Cracker Barrel's business really is synonymous with tried-and-true American values. Whether it's treating people fairly, with dignity and mutual respect, encouraging those with the drive and talent to succeed, or giving people a fair deal at a fair price, sticking to values like these has rewarded the company with the praise and loyalty of guests. Not only do those guests crave Cracker Barrel's home-style cooking while dining out close to home, or traveling throughout America, they also appreciate knowing that when they stop in at one of Cracker Barrel's 600 restaurants, the experience will be, without a doubt, a positive one.

The folks at Cracker Barrel also believe that they have an obligation to operate in a culture of mutual respect in the communities where they do business. Through their Cracker Barrel Foundation, they provide support for specific community relations efforts, like their in-school Rockin' Reader® program, Employee Resource Groups, and employee diversity education programs.

And of course, their values are now reflected in the products they offer from truly American vendors. These vendors are pleased to have the opportunity to offer their American-made products in Cracker Barrel's Old Country Store. If you're a Buy American advocate, one form of mutual respect is surely worth noting: an all-American business--Cracker Barrel, selling American-made products to support other American businesses, which helps to keep Americans employed and the engine of our national prosperity churning.

This kind of reciprocal and mutual relationship is one thing that's great about the way America is moving today, because it benefits all Americans, it keeps jobs, taxes, and profits within our national borders, and it helps us continue to build a strong and proud nation.

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*, *New York Times*, and *Business Week* among many other publications.