

BBB National Programs National Advertising Division Recommends that Traeger Pellet Grills Discontinue Falsely Denigrating Taste Claims For Food Cooked on Propane Gas Grills

For Immediate Release

Contact: Laura Brett, Vice President, NAD

New York, NY – December 12, 2019 – The National Advertising Division has determined that Traeger Pellet Grills LLC's claims that food cooked on a propane grill "tastes like gas" (or "tastes like ass") were not puffery, but, rather, unsupported objectively provable (and falsely denigrating) taste claims and recommended that they be discontinued. The claims for the advertiser's Traeger Grills were made in commercials appearing on YouTube, Facebook, on its website and elsewhere, and were challenged by Char-Broil, LLC, maker of competing charcoal, gas and other grills.

NAD is an investigative unit of the advertising industry's system of self-regulation and is a division of the BBB NP's self-regulatory and dispute resolution programs.

The commercial at issue depicts an interaction between a cool, confident Traeger griller using his "original wood-fired Traeger grill" and a buffoonish, bumbling neighbor using his propane gas grill. The Traeger griller points to the propane grill and asks, "Hey buddy, what flavor propane are you cooking with?!" and the neighbor responds, smiling proudly but stupidly, "GAS!" The neighbor holds up a piece of burnt, smoking meat with tongs, sniffs it and turns to his group of friends gathered on his lawn and exclaims "Smells like gas! Let's eat!" The Traeger griller states, "the problem with propane is that when you cook with gas, your food tastes like gas." However, when he explains that the "problem" with cooking with gas is that "your food tastes like . . ." he drops the "g" from gas and says "ass" instead. What follows is a series of the neighbor's guests tasting hamburgers and hot dogs just off the gas grill and repeatedly substituting "tastes like gas" with "tastes like ass" in a variety of ways, such as "this dude cookin' food that tastes like ass." The Traeger griller states, "[if] you want food that doesn't taste like gas, try it on a Traeger" and "stop making food that tastes like gas (or 'tastes like ass')."

The advertiser contended that its claim that food cooked on a propane grill "tastes like gas" (or "tastes like ass") in the context of its light-hearted, over-the-top funny commercial amounts to mere puffery because it is so outrageous that no reasonable consumer would take its claims seriously. However, NAD disagreed. NAD noted that the claim at issue here is an express one – communicated in both language and via the facial expression of the party-goers – that food cooked on a gas grill (such as Char-Broil's) results in food that "tastes like gas" (or "tastes like ass") – that is to say that use of propane imparts a distasteful flavor to the food. This is an inherently objectively provable claim which requires reliable taste testing as support, and NAD noted that no such evidence was provided by the advertiser.

NAD concluded that consumers will reasonably take away the message from the challenged commercial that gas/propane grills impart an undesirable flavor to food cooked on such grills because that is specifically what the challenged advertising expressly communicates – a message

that Traeger acknowledges is untrue. NAD noted that no amount of humor can rectify an expressly false claim. Therefore, NAD concluded that the advertiser's claims "[t]he problem with propane is that when you cook with gas, your food tastes like gas" (that food cooked on a propane grill "tastes like gas" or "tastes like ass") were not puffery but, rather, unsupported objectively provable (and falsely denigrating) taste claims and recommended that they be discontinued.

In its advertiser's statement, Traeger stated that it "will comply with NAD's recommendations."