

# Starbucks Is Criticized for Its Holiday Cups. Yes, Again.

By LIAM STACK | NOV. 20, 2017

The interlinked hands on the 2017 Starbucks holiday cups have some suggesting a “gay agenda.”

Thanksgiving is right around the corner, which means it is time to embark on a modern American holiday tradition: over-analyzing seasonally available Starbucks cups for signs of liberal nefariousness.

Starbucks has produced holiday cups for 20 years. Some have come and gone with little commotion, but others have drawn the ire of conservatives for what some have seen as a secular design scheme that failed to show proper respect for Christianity.

This year’s cup features nods to Christmas tradition, including a decorated Christmas tree, and was introduced by an online video that proclaimed “the holidays mean something different to everyone.”

But that big-tent approach wasn’t enough to avoid controversy. This year, critics wonder if Starbucks is using its holiday cups to promote homosexuality.

## A Gay Agenda?

The online video that introduced the 2017 holiday cup on Nov. 1 featured a diverse cast of Starbucks customers, including a pair of cartoon women who were shown holding hands.

The nature of their relationship was not specified, but some viewers saw them as a nod toward the inclusion of gay and transgender customers.

The video itself did not attract negative attention. The latest controversy has focused instead on a pair of gender-neutral hands holding each other on the side of the cup itself.

Those linked hands came to wider public attention after BuzzFeed published an article about them on Wednesday. It suggested the cup was “totally gay.”

“While people who follow both Starbucks holiday cup news and L.G.B.T. issues celebrated the video, the ordinary Starbucks customer probably didn’t realize the cup might have a gay agenda,” BuzzFeed said.

After that, it was off to the races.

Fox News picked up the story of what it called the “androgynous” cartoon hands, referring to Bible-quoting critics of Starbucks and criticizing BuzzFeed, which it said had “asserted the hypothesis is fact.”

The conservative site The Blaze also waded in, saying Starbucks had launched a “gay agenda campaign.”

Fox said it asked Starbucks about the cartoons but the company “neither confirms nor denies the allegations,” by which it presumably meant the promotion of lesbianism.

But in an email to The Times, Starbucks said it would let customers decide for themselves what the cup was about.

“This year’s hand-drawn cup features scenes of celebrating with loved ones — whoever they may be,” said Sanja Gould, a company spokeswoman. “We intentionally designed the cup so our customers can interpret it in their own way, adding their own color and illustrations.”