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Diageo will close Guinness’s Baltimore brewery after seven years

The $90 million site opened in 2018 as Guinness’s first U.S. brewery since 1954 before Diageo’s cost-cutting push.

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Diageo said Monday it will close the Guinness Open Gate Brewery in Baltimore, ending operations at a site that marked the Irish brewer’s return to U.S. production after more than six decades.

The company said the brewery’s last day open to the public will be Nov. 1, and that operations will wind down by the end of the year. The facility in Halethorpe, just outside Baltimore, opened in 2018 after a $90 million investment. At the time, Diageo presented it as an experimental brewery where Guinness could test small-batch beers and other innovations that might later be expanded.

The closure comes as Diageo pushes through a $1 billion savings plan across its global business. That effort has included more than 2,000 job cuts and a broader restructuring meant to reduce costs and improve competitiveness as alcohol consumption slows and consumer spending remains under pressure in many markets.

In a statement, a Diageo spokesperson said Guinness remains one of the company’s most important brands and that the group is still committed to investing in its long-term growth. The spokesperson said the decision to close the Baltimore brewery was not made lightly and cited changing consumer behavior and economic pressures that made the site difficult to sustain.

“While our Baltimore brewery will close, our commitment to bringing Guinness to consumers around the world remains as strong as ever,” the spokesperson said.

The Baltimore site carried symbolic value for Guinness. When it opened in 2018, it was the brand’s first brewery in the United States since 1954. It arrived during a period when large beer companies were trying to capture the energy of the craft brewing boom by opening destination breweries, taprooms and experimental facilities aimed at drawing tourists and testing new products.

Diageo still operates another Guinness brewery in the United States, in Chicago, which opened in 2023. The company did not signal any change to that operation. Instead, it said savings from its broader cost-cutting program will be reinvested into “relevant brands in competitive categories,” including Guinness.

The decision to shut the Baltimore brewery comes at a time of mixed results inside Diageo’s beer business. The company has said Guinness delivered 4% organic growth for its beer portfolio, showing continued strength for the brand even as some other parts of the business face weaker demand. But that brand momentum has not

insulated the company from broader pressures. Diageo said its North America business posted an 8.4% sales decline in fiscal 2026, making the region a central focus of its restructuring efforts.

That tension helps explain why the company is cutting a physical asset tied to Guinness while still promising to invest behind the brand. For large beverage companies, the question is not only whether a label is growing, but also whether each brewery, visitor center and innovation site is generating enough return in a market where borrowing costs, labor expenses and shifting drinking habits have changed the economics of expansion.

The Baltimore closure also matters beyond Guinness. Across the beverage industry, brewers, wine producers and spirits groups are facing a more cautious consumer, uneven traffic at hospitality venues and rising scrutiny of capital spending. That can force companies to revisit projects that once looked strategic, especially breweries that rely on tourism, on-site sales or experimental production rather than large-scale output. In that sense, Diageo’s move may be read as another sign that drinks makers are becoming more selective about where they put money, even when the brand involved remains important.

For Maryland, the closure removes a high-profile brewery that had become part of the region’s visitor economy and beer scene. The Guinness Open Gate Brewery and Barrel House drew local residents and tourists with taproom service, brewery events and small-batch releases that differed from Guinness products sold more widely in stores. Diageo did not provide a public figure Monday for how many employees would be affected at the site, but the company said it would support workers and the surrounding community during the transition.

The brewery opened at a moment of optimism for U.S. craft and specialty beer, when consumer interest in local production, brewery visits and limited-edition releases was strong. Since then, the market has changed. Growth in craft beer has slowed, competition from spirits and ready-to-drink products has increased, and younger consumers in many cases are drinking less alcohol or spending more selectively. Those shifts have put pressure on both smaller brewers and global companies with premium

beer portfolios.

Diageo has been under pressure to show it can protect margins and sharpen execution in North America after weaker performance in the region. Closing the Baltimore brewery is one of the clearest signs yet of how far the company is willing to go in reshaping its footprint. Even so, Diageo’s comments suggest it does not see the move as a retreat from Guinness in the United States, but as part of a broader effort to direct resources toward the parts of the business it believes can deliver stronger long-term growth.