

OTHER ACTS

COMMISSION

Publication of an application pursuant to Article 6(2) of Council Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs

(2007/C 232/10)

This publication confers the right to object to the application pursuant to Article 7 of Council Regulation (EC) No 510/2006. Statements of objection must reach the Commission within six months from the date of this publication.

SUMMARY

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) NO 510/2006**'SLOVENSKÁ BRYNDZA'****EC No: SK/PGI/005/0427/13.10.2004****PDO () PGI (X)**

This summary sets out the main points of the product specification for information purposes.

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Composition: Producers/processors (X) Other ()

3. *Type of product:*

Class 1.3 — Cheese

4. Specification:

(Summary of requirements under Article 4(2) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)

4.1. Name: 'Slovenská bryndza'

- 4.2. Description: 'Slovenská bryndza' is a natural, white, mature, spreadable cheese in granular form, manufactured according to the traditional method, by milling a lump of matured sheep's cheese or by milling a mixture of lump sheep's cheese and lump cow's cheese. The percentage of lump sheep's cheese is greater than 50 %. It has a delicate odour and taste and has a pleasantly sour sheep's cheese taste that is slightly spicy and salty.

Its characteristic sensory properties originate from the natural microflora present in the lump sheep's cheese, which is produced from raw sheep's milk using a specific production technique. It contains a broad range of naturally occurring micro-organisms, chiefly consisting of the following: *Lactobacillus*, *Enterococcus*, *Lactococcus*, *Streptococcus*, *Kluyveromyces marxianus*, *Geotrichum candidum*.

The cheese was originally distributed commercially in 5-10 kg *gelety* (wooden containers intended to carry milk or milk products), from which the seller would provide the consumer with the desired quantity. At present, it is delivered either in 1 to 5 kg buckets made of wood or another non-toxic material, or in small 125 g to 1 kg containers in the form of a prism overlaid with several layers of aluminium foil, in the form of a small roll covered with a layer of wood, or in the form of a cylinder in a small plastic casing.

- 4.3. Geographical area: The area is delimited by the mountainous part of the Slovak Republic. In early spring (March to April), the sheep graze in the parts of the delimited area that are at lower altitudes. In May, and during the summer months, they move to pastures at higher altitudes, lengthening the grazing period.

The western perimeter is formed by the western slopes of the White Carpathians, Považský Inovec, Trábeč, Vtáčnik, Štiavnické vrchy and Krupinská vrchovina.

The southern perimeter is formed by the southern slopes of the Krupinská vrchovina, Cerová vrchovina, Stolické vrchy, Slovenský kras, Volovské vrchy and Slanské vrchy.

The eastern perimeter is formed by the slopes of the Vihorlatská vrchovina, Popriečiny, Beskydské predhorie and Bukovské vrchy — the border with Ukraine.

The northern perimeter is formed by the border with Poland and the slopes of the following mountain chains: Laborecká vrchovina — Ondavská vrchovina — Lubovnianska vrchovina — Pieniny — Spišská Magura — Tatras — Skorušinské vrchy — Podbeskydská vrchovina — Oravské Beskydy — Kysucké Beskydy — the border with the Czech Republic — the slopes of the Turzovská vrchovina range — Javorníky — the White Carpathians — the Skalica border crossing.

The application features the name of the entire country because the delimited geographical area accounts for more than 80 % of the territory of Slovakia. The Slovak Republic has a surface area of 49 035 km²; it is one of the smallest countries in the EU and its surface area is comparable to that of certain regions in other EU countries. 'Slovenská bryndza' is produced in a uniform manner throughout the delimited area. The same breeds of sheep (*Wallachian*, *improved Wallachian*, *Cigaya* and *Eastfrisian* breeds) graze on pasture with the same flora and climatic conditions, thereby ensuring uniform quality of the basic raw ingredient — sheep's milk.

The production of 'Slovenská bryndza' has a historical link to the region in question, attested to in written sources — Otakar Laxa (1907), *Codex Alimentarius Austriacus* (Vienna 1917), even if at the time the product was not known as 'Slovenská bryndza' (owing to the historical circumstances). The 'Cheese' chapter of the Codex mentions the micro-organisms typical to this mature cheese ('*Karpathenkokkus*' and '*Oidium Lactic*'), which are still found in it today. The production process and the quality requirements for 'Slovenská bryndza' are also described by Teodor Wallo in a manuscript of 1907. This demonstrates that 'Slovenská bryndza' has been produced continuously over a period of many years, forming the principal means of subsistence for the inhabitants of the delimited area. In the first half of the twentieth century, Slovakia had more than 80 *bryndza* production plants. (*Bryndziarsky priemysel na Slovensku*, 1942).

'Slovenská bryndza' also has a long tradition abroad. It has been exported to Austria, Hungary, Poland and Germany and, in smaller quantities, to other countries in Europe and around the world.

'Bryndza is a part of our tradition: our grandfathers and great-grandfathers produced it, and we continue to produce it today. Visitors to Slovakia from Holland, Germany, England and other countries will enjoy our *halušky* (dumplings made from flour, water and potato), *pirohy* (stuffed pastry dishes) and *pomazánky* (spreads).' — Ján Kubáň, writer, 'Korene' 7-8/2005.

The export of 'Slovenská bryndza' has also markedly influenced and boosted tourism. Our typical foodstuffs based on sheep's milk are part of what makes Slovakia Slovak. More demanding foreign visitors are now bypassing the classic tourist attractions, and seeking out the unusual and the typically Slovak instead.

Tourists traditionally link Slovakia with 'Slovenská bryndza' and the preparation of traditional Slovak dishes, such as *bryndzové halušky* (national Slovak dish made from dumplings and *bryndza*), *bryndzové pagáčiky* (scones made with *bryndza*), *pirohy* stuffed with *bryndza*, *bryndzové placky* (pancakes with *bryndza*), *bryndzovníky* (cakes with *bryndza*) and others, which contribute to the reputation of Slovakia. 'Slovenská bryndza' gives a distinctive odour and taste to dishes. This odour is fixed in the minds of tourists, particularly those from neighbouring countries, who, when visiting Slovakia, search out shepherds' cottages and sheepfolds on account of 'Slovenská bryndza' and also the traditional Slovak dishes in which it forms the main ingredient.

Every year Slovak towns hold an annual fair called a 'jarmok', at which 'Slovenská bryndza', and the traditional dishes prepared using it, are a permanent feature. 'Slovenská bryndza' has been an essential Slovak product for several decades.

- 4.4. Proof of origin: The production of sheep's milk, cow's milk, lump sheep's cheese and lump cow's cheese intended for the production of 'Slovenská bryndza' is carried out exclusively in the delimited mountainous area of the Slovak Republic. The different *bryndza* producing plants purchase the milk and the lump sheep's cheese and cow's cheese exclusively from producers in the delimited area.

Checks and documentation are done in two stages. In the first stage, the suppliers of the sheep's milk and the lumps of cheese are checked. The check focuses on compliance with the delimited area, the type of farming, and compliance with the specification for the production of lump cheese. Suppliers of cow's milk and lump cow's cheese are checked to determine whether the milk used originates from a farm located within the delimited area and that the production of the lump cheese complies with the specification.

The farms, breeders and suppliers who meet the terms and conditions of the specification are put on a suppliers' list held and updated by the Guild of *bryndza* cheesemakers.

In the second stage, the producers of 'Slovenská bryndza' are checked. Checks are performed:

- to ascertain the origin of the raw materials used, by examining the purchase documents relating to the purchase and comparing them with the list of authorised suppliers,
- to ensure compliance with the minimum proportion of lump sheep's cheese in production, on the basis of documentation on the quantity of raw materials purchased and sales volumes for 'Slovenská bryndza',
- to ensure that the terms and conditions governing production and qualitative parameters comply with the specification, on the basis of product records and analysis results,
- on how the inoculum is prepared and the inoculation carried out in production using pasteurised sheep's milk.

The identification of the product is guaranteed by the wording 'Slovenská bryndza' on the label and the indication of the address of the production plant. The guarantee that the product originates from the geographically protected area comes from the location of the production plant in the clearly-defined geographical area in which 'Slovenská bryndza' may be produced.

- 4.5. Method of production: Production of raw sheep's milk: Raw sheep's milk collected from grazing sheep of the *Wallachian*, *improved Wallachian*, *Cigaya* and *Eastfrisian* breeds, which account for 80 % of farmed sheep, is used to produce the lump sheep's cheese used in the production of 'Slovenská bryndza'. Recently, there has also been development in the farming of the *Lacaune* breed. These breeds are farmed and graze in mountainous areas on the slopes of the mountain ranges located within the delimited area. The sheep are milked either by hand or using milking machines.

Production of lump sheep's cheese (raw ingredient for the production of 'Slovenská bryndza'): The freshly milked raw sheep's milk is warmed to a temperature of between 28 and 32 °C, and then renneted using liquid rennet, while being stirred continuously. Approximately half an hour after the addition of the rennet, the milk curdles. The casein obtained is stirred using a harp-shaped mixer and cut using a cheese knife into 0,5 to 1 cm chunks. The crumbled casein is left to solidify and then shaped by hand into a lump. The lump is separated from the whey using a cheese cloth and left to drain. The curdling of the casein takes place in a wooden press or in a double-bottomed stainless-steel receptacle. When the lump of sheep's cheese is removed from the cheese cloth, it weighs from 3 to 7 kg.

Once drained and solidified (after 4 to 10 hours), the lump of sheep's cheese is placed on a wooden or stainless-steel shelf to ferment. During fermentation, the lump of cheese is moved and turned over regularly. Fermentation is carried out at a temperature of 21 to 25 °C and lasts for two to three days. By the end of the fermentation, the cheese has a pH of a maximum 5,2.

The maturing of the lump of sheep's cheese takes place at temperatures ranging from 8 to 20 °C depending on the conditions at the sheepfold. The cheese matures for four to six days on wooden or stainless-steel shelves. As in the fermentation process, the lumps are turned over, ensuring that more of the whey is drained, and wiped with a dry cloth. The pH falls, reaching a value of 4,2 to 4,8. Once matured, the lump of sheep's cheese no longer releases whey, is not elastic, can be moulded by hand, and has a pleasant milky acidic taste.

Production of lump sheep's cheese using pasteurised milk: Raw sheep's milk may be pasteurised before curdling. Pasteurisation is carried out at a temperature of 72 °C for 20 seconds.

For pasteurisation, it is necessary to inoculate the pasteurised milk with a fermenting agent composed of micro-organisms isolated in quality barrel sheep's cheese, in non-pasteurised sheep's milk or in mixtures of the two, so that these micro-organisms completely replace the natural flora.

Curdling and the production of casein is carried out in the same conditions as at the sheepfold: the casein is emptied into a cheese vat, where the cheese is caught in cheese cloths and slightly compressed. After the casein is drained and solidified, it is cut into smaller pieces using a knife; the pieces are placed on wooden or stainless-steel shelves in a space reserved for fermentation. The conditions for fermentation and maturing are identical to those used at the sheepfold.

Production of barrel sheep's cheese: Barrel cheese is produced from crushed lumps of sheep's cheese, prepared according to the process specified for the production of 'Slovenská bryndza' as regards the following aspects: sorting, maturing, grinding. The cheese is pressed for longer, then crushed and pressed into layers and salted in wooden barrels or other appropriate receptacles, so that the salt content reaches approximately 4 to 6 %. Before filling, the interior of the receptacle is covered with clean wooden lining. During filling, it is important that the pressure applied is uniform. After filling, the barrel is sealed and placed in refrigerated warehouses or cellars, where the lump sheep's cheese matures for at least two months at a temperature of 2 to 6 °C.

Production of raw cow's milk: The breed of cow and method by which they are reared do not play a determining role in the quality of 'Slovenská bryndza'.

Production of the lump cow's cheese: The lump of cow's cheese is produced using pasteurised full fat cow's milk. After pasteurisation, the milk is warmed slightly at a temperature of 30 to 31 °C, calcium chloride is added, and the mixture is renneted using a fresh amount of casein so as to ensure curdling within 60 minutes. The curd is then slowly cut into 10 to 15 mm chunks. After the draining of a part of the whey, the curd solidifies for 15 to 30 minutes while being gently stirred. The solidified curd is placed in a cheese vat together with the whey, and they are gently pressed and moulded. The pressing and draining take place at a temperature of between 20 and 22 °C over a period of 24 hours. During the following 48 hours, the lump cow's cheese ferments at a temperature of between 18 and 22 °C. The remainder of the process is identical to that described for the production of lump sheep's cheese.

Production of 'Slovenská bryndza': The production of 'Slovenská bryndza' is carried out in *bryndza* production plants, which buy the lump sheep's cheese and cow's cheese or produce them themselves.

The lump sheep's cheese from the sheepfolds and the lump cow's cheese are generally weighed and purchased twice a week. After their arrival in the *bryndza* plant, they are sorted according to their level of maturity and individually placed in maturation tanks. The cheese reaches maturity at the *bryndza* plant at a temperature of between 8 and 20 °C over a period of three to five days on average, so that the total maturing period starting from the day of production of the cheese is seven to eight days. The cheese in the maturation tanks is moved and wiped as necessary.

Once matured, the lump cheese is carefully cleaned by scraping away the dried layer. The cleaned cheese is placed in a pressing vat. Once the vat has been filled, pressing lasts for two days, at a pressure of 0,5 to 4 bars.

Once the lump sheep's cheese and cow's cheese have reached maturity, they are crushed and ground in the required proportions (minimum 50 % lump sheep's cheese). The crushing is done using a cutting device or a grinder, which cuts the cheese into 2 to 5 cm chunks and, at the same time, leads to the mill. The grinding is carried out in a cylinder mill or a similar device, which grinds and spreads the cheese at the same time, thanks to the different speeds of the cylinders of the mill.

The ground cheese is carefully stirred in the mixing device, homogenising it. During the stirring, salt or a saturated salt solution is added in order to reach the required salt and dry matter contents.

After it has been stirred thoroughly, in the interests of quality and traceability, the 'Slovenská bryndza' is packaged on site, either by hand or automatically. It is packaged either in small 1 to 5 kg buckets made of wood or another non-toxic material, or in small packages overlaid with several layers of aluminium foil, in the form of a small roll with a wooden casing, or in the form of a cylinder in a plastic packet.

The product can spoil quickly, endangering product quality. Therefore, in order to preserve the quality of the product and to prevent dilution with curd cheese or water, the packaging of the product outside the *bryndza* plants is prohibited.

All the stages of the production take place within the delimited geographical area.

- 4.6. Link: Sheep farming has a long tradition on the territory of the Slovak Republic. Sheep's cheese and 'Slovenská bryndza' were the chief means of subsistence for its inhabitants, particularly in the regions of Slovakia situated in the mountains or in the foothills of the mountains. At times when there was a surplus of milk, the lump sheep's cheese was crushed, compressed, mixed with salt and placed in wooden barrels. This naturally preserved lump cheese, known as barrel *bryndza*, could be kept for a long time and formed an important source of subsistence when there were milk shortages. The industrial production of *bryndza* began in the second half of the 18th century with the opening of *bryndza* plants at Detva (1787) and Zvolenská Slatina (1797). The production of 'Slovenská bryndza' as a spreadable cheese with a reduced salt content was introduced at the start of the nineteenth century in Zvolen and spread rapidly throughout Slovakia.

During the 1930s, approximately 2 million kilos of 'Slovenská bryndza' were produced on the current territory of Slovakia, in 48 *bryndza* plants. Lump sheep's cheese could be purchased throughout the territory of the Slovak Republic. After World War Two, sheep farming and the purchase of lump sheep's cheese continued only in mountain regions inside the delimited area.

'Slovenská bryndza' is a product whose properties depend on the natural microflora resulting from the soil and climate conditions in the delimited area in which the sheep graze and are reared. The microflora present in 'Slovenská bryndza' is very varied and is chiefly made up of the following geni: *Lactobacillus*, *Lactococcus*, *Streptococcus*, *Enterococcus*, *Kluyveromyces marxianus* and *Geotrichum candidum*.

The specific microflora of 'Slovenská bryndza' and its connection to the quality of the product were noted in the *Codex Alimentarius Austriacus* (Volume III; Vienna 1917).

These types of micro-organisms continue to be characteristic for 'Slovenská bryndza' today. The old name 'Karpathenkokkus' was used by Professor Otakar Laxa for the natural mixture of lactobacteria, in which micro-organisms of the geni *Lactobacillus*, *Lactococcus*, *Streptococcus* and *Enterococcus* were later identified. He used the name 'Oidium Lactis' for a noble mould known as *Geotrichum candidum* in the current classification.

The application for the registration of the geographical indication 'Slovenská bryndza' is based on the reputation of the product and the tradition surrounding it, as well as its quality and specific properties, as mentioned in point 4.2. 'Slovenská bryndza' is considered to be the first Slovak invention, and was invented by Ján Vagač, who conceived it while trying to find a means of preserving sheep's cheese. As a result, the first Slovak *bryndza* plant was founded in Detva in 1787. The export of 'Slovenská bryndza' also bears testament to its reputation. Already before World War One, approximately 3,5 million kilos of 'Slovenská bryndza' were produced, of which more than 2/3 were exported outside the territory of Slovakia, chiefly to Austria and Hungary. The tradition of 'Slovenská bryndza' is also attested to by its use in the preparation of traditional Slovak specialities.

The specific quality and properties of 'Slovenská bryndza' result from its method of preparation, namely the crushing and milling of matured lump sheep's cheese or of a mixture of lump sheep's cheese and cow's cheese in a cutting machine and then in a cylinder mill which, thanks to the different speeds of the cylinders, process the ingredients into a delicate, spreadable cheese consisting of chunks and having a pleasant fermented sheep's cheese odour. 'Slovenská bryndza' also contains a rich mixture of lactobacteria and lactic fermenting agents.

- 4.7. Inspection body: Quality control and checks on compliance with the specification for 'Slovenská bryndza' are carried out regularly by the firm BEL/NOVAMANN International s.r.o., CERTEX certification body, accredited under standard EN 45011, authorised by the Slovak Ministry of Agriculture.

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- 4.8. Labelling: A producer which makes 'Slovenská bryndza' in compliance with this specification is entitled to use the name 'Slovenská bryndza' when labelling, advertising and marketing the product and may use the protected geographical indication or the Community symbol.

The name 'Slovenská bryndza' must feature prominently on the product label, along with the address of the production plant.
