

OTHER ACTS

EUROPEAN 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

(2010/C 321/08)

This publication confers the right to object to the application pursuant to Article 7 of Council Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 ⁽¹⁾. Statements of objection must reach the Commission within six months from the date of this publication.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006

'QUESO CASÍN'

EC No: ES-PDO-0005-0718-04.09.2008

PGI () PDO (X)

1. **Name:**

'Queso Casín'

2. **Member State or third country:**

Spain

3. **Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff:**3.1. *Type of product:*

Class 1.3 — Cheese

3.2. *Description of product to which the name in (1) applies:*

Full-fat, hard or semi-hard mature cheese made from whole, unpasteurised cow's milk, by means of enzymatic coagulation and kneading the resulting paste.

The milk used for producing the protected cheeses comes from healthy cows of the Asturiana de la Montaña o Casina, Asturiana de los Valles and Frisona breeds and crosses thereof.

When matured, the cheese has the following characteristics:

Physical and chemical characteristics:

Minimum dry matter: 57 %

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 93, 31.3.2006, p. 12.

Minimum fat content of dry matter: 45 %

Minimum protein content of dry matter: 35 %

Physical and organoleptic properties:

Type and presentation: hard to semi-hard, matured to cured or semi-cured.

Form: irregular discoidal-cylindrical, with one side bearing floral or geometrical markings, symbols or the producer's name. Some 10-20 cm in diameter and 4-7 cm in height.

Weight: between 250 and 1 000 grams.

Rind: smooth, fine and almost non-existent because, after repeated kneading, the cheese matures uniformly and at the same rate inside and out. Its exterior and interior form a compact, bound mass, which is clean, dry and slightly oily. It is dark creamy-yellow in colour, with shades of white. Imprinted in bas-relief on the upper side is the producer's individual stamp.

Body: firm, friable, hard to semi-hard, yellowish colour, no eyes, although it may have small cracks. Crumbly when cut. Buttery feel on the palate. Homogenous and plastic consistency.

Aroma: strong and potent.

Flavour: depends on the production method, particularly the number of times it is kneaded in the kneading machine: if kneaded heavily, it has a bitter, spicy, strong flavour, an acquired taste, with the penetrating, rustic aroma of butter seasoned by time; if kneaded less heavily, the flavour is the same though reduced in intensity. In any event, it has a strong, broad, persistent, spicy flavour, slightly bitter at the back of the mouth, with a strong aftertaste.

Microbiological characteristics:

Will be adapted to the requirements in the rules in force.

3.3. *Raw materials (for processed products only):*

Cow's milk, lactic ferments, calcium chloride, rennet and salt.

3.4. *Feed (for products of animal origin only):*

The feed of the cattle that produce the milk used as the raw material for producing 'queso Casín' is based directly on the area's natural resources, from pasture-grazing practically all year round, complemented by hay and fresh fodder from the producer's own farm, with the creation of a rotational system for using the pastures. The herds are essentially traditional, low in number and linked to the land, where it is common to see them grazing almost all year round.

Their feed thus originates in the defined geographical area. Exceptionally, when fodder from the producers' own farms is scarce, their rations may be supplemented by small quantities of externally produced cereals and legumes.

3.5. *Specific steps in production that must take place in the identified geographical area:*

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3.6. *Specific rules concerning slicing, grating, packaging, etc.:*

Packaging — to safeguard the product's quality, it is packaged on the premises where it is made or matured before distribution as its fine, thin, almost non-existent rind makes it more susceptible to contamination and changes in its external appearance.

Furthermore, for the same reason, this cheese can be eaten whole, which means it must be pre-packaged.

The permitted materials for its packaging are paper, cardboard, wood or plastic, for food use or other uses authorised by the Regulatory Council.

3.7. Specific rules concerning labelling:

The labelling will be adapted to conform to the general rules governing the labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs. As well as each producer's individual label, the protected cheeses will bear a specific, numbered secondary label to safeguard the product's identity.

The label of the protected cheeses should feature a separate mention of the words 'Denominación de Origen Protegida "Queso Casín"' — and the logo, which will be uniform, with four colour options, for all operators who market cheeses protected by the PDO. They are reproduced below.



4. Concise definition of the geographical area:

The defined geographical area for the production of milk and the manufacture, maturation and packaging of the PDO 'Queso Casín' cheeses is situated in the south of the Asturias region, in the mid-east to be precise. The municipalities included in this geographical area are: Caso, Sobrescobio and Piloña.

5. Link with the geographical area:

5.1. Specificity of the geographical area:

It is defined by its belonging to the area of the central eastern Asturian mountains, a landscape characterised by narrow valleys separated by wide rocky crests. The area's mountainous nature means that steep slopes predominate for the greater part. The medium-high altitudes converge on a depressed central plain area, part of the preitoral depression that runs from east to west and serves as the riverbed for the Piloña. That river and the Alto Nalón are the area's two biggest rivers.

Apart from the highest mountain heights, this area enjoys an oceanic climate, temperate with mild rains, though persistent throughout the year, and a moderate thermal fluctuation.

This landscape of valleys or river basins surrounded by mountains also gives rise to abundant and persistent fogs. All these processes cause a notable reduction of sunshine throughout the year.

The countryside's vegetation is defined by the presence of abundant meadows for hay and pasture, as well as a large expanse of woods and scrubland areas and rocky outcrops on the steepest slopes.

The most interesting species that cover the meadows and pastures belong to the families of grasses and legumes.

It was in these conditions that the technique for making 'Casín' cheese developed, in response to the need to find a safe and lasting means of conservation in an area where the mild temperatures and the predominance of rainy and cloudy days confer a high degree of atmospheric humidity, making it difficult to dry the curds produced when the milk coagulates.

'Kneading' emerged as the habitual and only way to bind together the various small curds into one piece. Repeating this process produced a drier and more compact mass, from which a more durable product could be obtained. Moreover, it allowed salt to be added to the mass in a homogenous form and the even spread of microorganisms which appeared during fermentation, thereby facilitating the necessary maturation, all of which gave the product specific organoleptic characteristics.

The kneading was done by hand until a specific mechanism was developed for it, namely the kneading machine or table which appears to have been an adaption of a tool used in traditional bread-making, known as the 'bregadora' or 'bregadera', and which was used on a communal basis — the 'diis d'amasar' — so as to make the scarce material resources profitable and improve production, though it still remained laborious.

This work involved processing semi-processed curds ('gorollus') and cheeses from different producers, which had to be distinguishable from each other. The solution was to mark each piece with a characteristic stamp to make it quick and easy to identify its owner. A cylindrical or fusiform wooden tool with simple symbols set on the ends — known as an 'ochavau' — was used to mark the semi-processed curds, one mark stamped onto each mass produced. The 'marcu' or 'cuñu' was used to mark the finished cheeses. This was a bigger and more elaborate wooden tool, with a variety of finely decorated stamps used to indicate the producer. Nowadays it is common for the 'marcu' to bear the producer's name.

Probably owing to its complexity, this production method — particularly the kneading — remains the exclusive preserve of this variety of cheese. The main factor that contributed to its preservation was the work of the women who produced the cheese for domestic consumption and the enthusiasm of the sole (female) producer who nowadays exhibits and markets the product at fairs and markets throughout Asturias and the rest of Spain. Another important factor was the cooperation of local rural development groups.

5.2. Specificity of the product:

'Casín' cheese can be identified externally by the peculiar appearance given to it by the seal with each producer's own anagram, stamped with a die ('marcu') marking the whole of the upper side of each cheese.

The specific character of this cheese has been described: its irregular cylindrical-discoidal form; its smooth, fine, almost non-existent rind which forms a compact mass with the inside; its kneaded body; its strong, persistent flavour and aroma that grow every time the curd is kneaded by the kneading machine; its composition that makes it one of Spain's (and the world's) driest and most protein-rich cheeses.

This cheese is completely different from all the other varieties produced, including those produced in neighbouring municipalities. Caso's border with the municipality of Pongo is defined by a series of mountainous ranges, which also represents the division between two types of classic Asturian cheeses — 'Casín' and the cheese from Los Beyos — and takes on a special relevance here.

Historical study provides documentary evidence of the importance of 'Casín' cheese.

In 'En el país de los 100 quesos' (In the Land of 100 Cheeses), Barcelona, 2000, Enric Canut claims that 'with the way it is produced and the crude tools used, Casín cheese may be one of the oldest cheeses in Spain'.

Written accounts of the cheese, by specific populations of the area, date back to the 14th century. 'The abbess D^a Gontrodo, leasing the *mansos* of San salvador de Sobrecastello in 1328 for seven years at a price of 70 *maravedís* to be paid every first of September, and "kneaded cheeses" to be paid every (feast day of) San Martín in November.'

In 1341, *idem*, 'and good kneaded cheeses.'

There are references to this cheese in the writings of Jovellanos (18th century); in the 'Diccionario Geográfico de Madoz' (geographical dictionary of Madoz), published at the beginning of the 19th century, and in the 'Curso de Agricultura Elemental' (elementary agricultural course book) by Dionisio Martín Ayuso, published at the end of the 19th century.

In 'Asturias' by O. Bellmut and Fermin Canella (Gijón, 1900), the cheese from Caso is cited as one of the most famous cheeses to have crossed the borders of the Asturias. In the same vein, it appears in 'Los Elementos de Agricultura y Técnica Agrícola e Industrial', F. Requejo y M. Tortosa (Madrid, 1903).

The book 'Comer en Asturias' (Eating in Asturias) (Madrid, 1980) by Eduardo Méndez Riestra mentions 'Casín' cheese among those cheeses produced in Asturias, as does Carlos Mero González, in his 'Guía Práctica de los quesos de España' (Practical Guide to the Cheeses of Spain) (Madrid, 1983) and Simone Ortega in 'Tabla de quesos españoles' (Table of Spanish Cheeses) (Madrid, 1983).

'El Gran Libro de la Cocina Asturiana' (The Big Book of Asturian Cooking) by chemist and writer J.A. Fidalgo Sánchez (Gijón, 1986) claims that 'Casín' cheese is the cheese most representative of the central southern region of Asturias.

5.3. *Causal link between the geographical area and the quality or characteristics of the product (for PDO) or a specific quality, the reputation or other characteristic of the product (for PGI):*

The mountainous topography was the main factor in determining that the surplus milk should be used to make cheese, as the constraints imposed by the poor communications meant that milk could only be used for the production of cheese and butter.

It was a combination of all the natural elements that led to the production of this specific type of cheese. On the one hand, the topography has resulted in a landscape of low meadows and mountain pastures with an extraordinary diversity of flora and vegetation, which have a direct bearing on the diet of the cattle that produce the milk and allow these resources to be exploited using traditional methods.

On the other hand, the climate and the abundant, gentle rain evenly spread throughout the year, the lack of sunshine and the moderate temperatures are ideal for ensuring local fodder production and for keeping cattle in the pastures.

All the milk used to make 'Casín' cheese comes from cows that graze regularly on the area's meadows and pastures throughout the year.

The first makers of this cheese were the farmers of old who developed a production method in keeping with the constraints imposed by the area's environmental conditions so as to lengthen the time they could keep a perishable product, giving rise to a unique variety of cheese, the characteristics of which are a result of, and determined, by a combination of the natural elements and the particular production method.

Reference to publication of the specification:

(Article 5(7) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)

http://www.asturias.es/Asturias/descargas/PDF_TEMAS/Agricultura/pliego_condiciones_dop_queso_casin.pdf
