OTHER ACTS

COMMISSION

Publication of an application in accordance with 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

(2008/C 202/10)

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 of the date of this publication.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006

‘WIELKOPOLSKI SER SMAŻONY’

EC No: PL-PGI-005-0551-04.08.2006

PGI (X) PDO ( )

1. Name

‘Wielkopolski ser smażony’

2. Member State or Third Country

Poland

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff

3.1. Type of product [as in Annex II]

Group: Cheese — class 1.3

3.2. Description of the product to which the name in point 1 applies

Consistency:

Fried cheese from Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) has a firm, homogenous and elastic consistency.

Colour:

The colour of the cheese mass varies from light cream to yellow, depending on the quality of butter used in production (the fat content of the cheese mass may not be lower than 7.5 %) and how intensely it is fried.

Taste and smell:

The taste and smell are typical for fried cheese, i.e. rather sharp, originating in ripened curds.

pH value: 5.2-5.6.

Water: maximum 65 %.

Fat: minimum 7.5 %

Coagulase-positive Staphylococcus: absent in 0.1 g.

Number of moulds: maximum 100 in 1 g.

Sulphite-reducing spores: absent in 1 g.

Sometimes visible caraway seeds are added to the fried cheese. The taste and smell of fried cheese with caraway remains typical for that product (originating in ripened curds) while the taste and smell of caraway are clearly perceptible. The other features of the fried cheese with caraway are the same as for cheese without caraway.

3.3. Raw materials (only for processed products)

1. Milk

The producers of Wielkopolska fried cheese buy their milk from dairy producers:
— whom they are able to supervise thoroughly, and
— who are able to guarantee fresh milk of the desired quality to be used for curds intended for the production of fried cheese.

The entire production cycle of Wielkopolska fried cheese, from the purchase of raw milk to the finished product, should not take more than six or seven days. Any extension of the production process (use of milk or curds which have been kept too long) has a negative impact on the final product.

2. Caraway

Caraway may be added to Wielkopolska fried cheese in order to obtain one of the two possible taste varieties of the cheese, which are:
— natural (pure) Wielkopolska fried cheese,
— Wielkopolska fried cheese with caraway.

These are the only two varieties of fried cheese which may be marketed under the name ‘Wielkopolska fried cheese’.

3.4. Feed (for products of animal origin only)

There is no particular limitation as to the origin of feed.

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

Production stages:
— Storage of raw milk — Raw milk is stored for no longer than 24 hours at a maximum temperature of 6 °C.
— Skimming the milk — The skimming is done in centrifuges (special apparatus for skimming milk). The fat content of the skimmed milk should not exceed 1 %.
— Heating the milk — The skimmed milk is heated to a temperature of 70-75 °C and left at that temperature for at least 30 seconds.
— Preparation of the starter culture — The starter culture is prepared from pasteurised milk with the addition of a strain of lactic streptococci. This milk preparation is kept at a temperature of 25 °C for 8-10 hours, which produces the starter culture, i.e. milk containing natural microflora.
— Souring — The milk is soured at 20-23 °C through the addition of the starter culture corresponding to 2 % of the total milk quantity.
— Heating and turning the curds — When the curds have reached an acidity of about 31 °SH, they are slowly heated (for about 2 hours) to a temperature of 32-33 °C. The heated curds are then cut and gently turned.
— Draining — The whey separated from the curds is drained off and the curds are then pressed and drained at a temperature of 20 °C until a water content of about 64 % is obtained. Draining off the water results in curd cheese.
— Crumbling and placing on metal sheets — The curd cheese is crumbled and then spread on metal sheets in the cheese maturer.
Ripening — The ripening process (maturation of the curd cheese) takes place on metal sheets at a temperature of 16-27 °C. The process consists in the natural decomposition of the albumen until the curd becomes a glassy mass with a smell, consistency and appearance characteristic of that process. Ripening takes 2 or 3 days. The indication that the ripening process can be terminated is the content of curd that has not ripened, which for the whole mass should be less than 25 %.

Mixing with fat and frying — The matured curd cheese is mixed with milk fat (butter) with the addition of salt, and also caraway in the case of Wielkopolska fried cheese with caraway. It is then fried for about 15 minutes at a temperature of at least 90 °C.

**Banned practice:**

'Banned practice' refers to the addition of substances that may replace the ripening process (e.g. fluxes, i.e. salts that enable frying without ripening) or to the use of fats other than milk fat (butter) for production.

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

Wielkopolska fried cheese is packed at the production site, since it may be packed (moulded) only directly after frying, when it is still hot. Reheating the fried cheese, once cooled, in order to shape it, is not allowed. Such practice is detrimental to the quality of the product.

3.7. **Specific rules concerning labelling**

Each package should carry the producer's label. The label should indicate the name ‘Wielkopolski ser smażony’. The logo of the Protected Geographical Indication should be clearly visible on the label.

4. **Concise definition of the geographical area**

The area is situated within the administrative boundaries of the voivodship of Wielkopolska.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

5.1. **Specificity of the geographical area**

Specificity of the area where Wielkopolska fried cheese is produced:

Beginning at the end of the eighteenth century, there was a colonising movement concentrated on the area of Wielkopolska (particularly western Wielkopolska) called the ‘Olęderski’ movement (the name ‘Olędrzy’ was used for colonisers from Western and South-Western Europe). It is highly probable that the practice of frying cheese was started by these settlers.

These ‘Olędrzy’, as well as settlers from the region of Brandenburg (‘Bamberski’ farmers) were at the origin of the local know-how and custom shaped over centuries on the farms of Wielkopolska, which led to a high level of cattle farming, agriculture and methods of obtaining milk in those areas. Up to this day Wielkopolska has been known for the uniform quality of its milk. As milk cows yielded more milk, farmers sought ways of preserving one of the dairy products, namely fresh curd cheese. One such method was the production of fried cheese following the natural ripening of curd cheese (the natural decomposition of albumen which takes 2-3 days). This method of handling curd cheese (ripening and frying) did not come about by chance. Initially this was done in order to extend the period in which the cheese could be eaten. With time, the production of fried cheese in Wielkopolska became everyday routine and no meal in Wielkopolska was complete without it.
The natural method of producing Wielkopolska fried cheese, steeped in tradition, points to a solid link between the region where it is produced, the correct execution of each stage of production and the particular quality of fried cheese.

5.2. Specificity of the product

Wielkopolska fried cheese owes its characteristic taste and smell to the ripened and fried curd cheese and to the caraway (in the case of fried cheese with caraway). The use of fresh raw materials, i.e. milk and the curd cheese produced from it, is extremely important for the production of Wielkopolska fried cheese. This is linked to the necessity of ensuring the specific quality of the final product and finishing the whole production cycle of the fried cheese within 6-7 days.

The ripening process is particularly important for the production of this fried cheese. The process consists in the natural decomposition of albumen which lasts for 2-3 days. It is precisely the ripening process that has a determining influence on the specificity and exceptional character of Wielkopolska fried cheese, i.e. its taste and smell.

Frying the cheese using only milk fat (butter) is an equally important process, since it influences the taste, smell, colour and consistency of the final product.

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

The link between Wielkopolska fried cheese with the region of production is based, in particular, on its fame, described below, and the quality characteristics mentioned under point 5.2 which are due to the traditional methods of production.

Wielkopolska fried cheese is typical for the lands of western Wielkopolska together with the Nowotomyska Plain, and for central Wielkopolska: witness the frequent references to it in old documents, books and other accounts written on or about these lands. One example is a work published in Poznań at the end of the nineteenth century, *Gospodyni doskonała, czyli Przepisy utrzymywania porządku w domu i zaopatrzenia* ('The Excellent Housekeeper, or How to Take Care of and Shop for your Household') from 1899, where we find a recipe for fried cheese. There is also confirmation of the link between fried cheese and Wielkopolska in *Kucharz wielkopolski* ('The Wielkopolska Chef') by Maria Slezińska from 1904. This book was published in Poznań by Jarosław Leitgeber. 'The fast way of making cheese' ('Prędki sposób robienia sera') described in this book does indeed contain information on making fried cheese according to the recipe from Wielkopolska.

Fried cheese has also been mentioned in more recent books. The fact that the recipe for fried cheese is regional and particular to Wielkopolska is confirmed by its inclusion in *Kuchnia Wielkopolska — wczoraj i dziś, czyli porady jak smacznie i tanio gotować zachowując tradycje i zdrowie* ('Wielkopolska Cuisine Yesterday and Today — How to Cook Tasty and Inexpensive Meals while Respecting Tradition and Health'), published in Poznań in 1992. A recipe for fried cheese with caraway is also included in *Potrawy z serami* ('Cheese dishes') by Barbara Adamczewska (2005).

With time, preparing and eating fried cheese became a popular and everyday activity in Wielkopolska. Fried cheese itself became a typical product for the inhabitants of Wielkopolska, and no breakfast or supper was complete without it.

Wielkopolska fried cheese produced according to the recipe passed down the generations has maintained its high reputation throughout Poland and abroad. Its taste has always been appreciated by the inhabitants of Wielkopolska. They associate the taste of fried cheese with their childhood. The cheese is produced according to local tradition and the recipe is typical of that part of Poland. Consumers are on the look-out for precisely that fried cheese which their mothers and grandmothers used to make at home.
Nowadays fried cheese produced throughout Wielkopolska is mainly sold in the regional capital, Poznań: further proof that this exceptional product, with its extremely characteristic taste and smell, is a typical product linked to a definite region and constitutes an indissociable part of its culture.

Fried cheese produced by various Wielkopolska producers has received a great number of prizes and distinctions at the Wielkopolska Consumer Competition for Product Quality, where consumers award the prizes. This confirms the consistently high reputation of Wielkopolska fried cheese and its superior quality which is so appreciated by consumers. The fact that prizes have been awarded to various producers from Wielkopolska over the years shows that the product is of a high quality which all producers are eager to maintain.

Reference to publication of the specification

http://www.bip.minrol.gov.pl/strona/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabOrgId=1620&LangId=0