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 44/06)

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
‘OLIVE DE NIMES’
EC No: FR-PDO-0005-0568-10.11.2006
PGI ( ) PDO ( X )

1. Name:
‘Olive de Nîmes’

2. Member State or Third Country:
France

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff:
3.1. Type of product:
Class 1.6. Fruit, vegetables and cereals fresh or processed.

3.2. Description of product to which the name in (1) applies:
The ‘Olive de Nîmes’ is a whole olive of a pure green colour, without a stalk and exclusively of the Picholine variety. The olive is neither crushed nor damaged.

The olives are debittered by macerating them in an alkaline solution of potash or soda, of a density of not more than 1 032. After soaking until the olives have been partly debittered, the alkaline solution is replaced with clean drinking water to rinse them. The olives are then placed in sea salt brine.

The olives are juicy and characteristically crunchy, with a salty, buttery and typically hazelnut flavour.

The minimum size corresponds to a maximum of 34 fruits per 100 grams.

Batches must be of uniform colour and size.

3.3. Raw materials:
N.A.

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

3.5. Specific steps in production that must take place in the identified geographical area:
Every part of the process of growing, preparing and packing the olives must take place within the defined geographical area.

3.6. Specific rules concerning slicing, grating, packaging, etc.:
For sale to the final consumer, the olives may be packed in containers holding a maximum of 8 kg (net drained weight).

Packing must take place within the area because the olive is a fragile fruit and handling must be limited. It is vulnerable to knocks (because it marks easily) and differences in temperature that can occur during transport.

This requirement helps maintain the look of the olive and protect it as well as ensuring better traceability.

3.7. Specific rules concerning labelling:

In addition to the compulsory information provided for by legislation on the labelling and presentation of foodstuffs, Protected Designation of Origin ‘Olive de Nîmes’ labels must include the following:

— the name of the designation ‘Olive de Nîmes’,
— the words: ‘appellation d’origine contrôlée’ (protected designation of origin) or the letters ‘AOC’. If the name of a holding or a brand appears on the label independently of the address, the name of the designation is repeated between the words: ‘appellation’ and ‘contrôlée’.

These details must all be in the same field of vision and on the same label.

They must be indicated in conspicuous, clearly legible and indelible characters of a sufficient size to stand out from the label on which they are printed so as to be clearly distinguishable from all other written or graphic information.

4. Concise definition of the geographical area:

The geographical production area of the ‘Olive de Nîmes’ covers the olive production area of Gard and the eastern part of that of Hérault, except for the Causses, the mountains of the Cévennes and the Camargue.

Its natural borders are the River Rhône to the east and the Camargue region to the south. The northern border is a climatic one, the line up to which Picholine is grown. To the north-east it follows the border of the Department of Gard (garrigue massifs at an altitude of more than 300 metres). To the west, the border goes beyond the Vidourle Valley and follows a line of wooded peaks from Ganges to Pic St Loup to le Lez.

The geographical area is characterised by hills and slopes, generally lower than 350 metres in altitude. The land is largely made up of tertiary molasse, cretaceous limestone and limestone clay, and alluvial terraces. The climate is Mediterranean and is affected by the mistral.

The production area covers 223 municipalities, 183 in Gard and 40 in Hérault:

The Department of Gard:
Aigaliers; Aigremont; Aigues-Vives; Alès; Anduze; Aramon Argilliers; Arpaillargues-et-Aureillac; Aspères; Aubais; Aubord; Aubussargues; Aujargues; Bagard; Baron; Beauvoisin; Belvezet; Bernis; Bezouce; Blauzac; Boisset-et-Gaujac; Boissières; Boucoiran-et-Nozières; Bouillargues; Bouquet; Bourdic; Bragassargues; Brignon; Brouzet-les-Quissac; Bruguère (la); Cabrières; Cadière-et-Cambo (la); Caissargues; Calmette (la); Calvisson; Canaules-et-Argentières; Cannes-et-Clairan; Cardet; Carnas; Cassagnoles; Castelnau-Valence; Castillon-du-Gard; Caveirac; Clarensac; Cogognan; Collias; Collorgues; Combas; Comps; Congénies; Conqueyrac; Corconne; Crespian; Cruviers-Lascours; Deaux; Dion; Domazan; Domessargues; Dufort-et-Saint-Martin-de-Sossenac; Estezargues; Euzet; Flaux; Foissac; Fons; Fons-sur-Lussan; Fontanès; Fontarèches; Fournes; Gaillhan; Gajan; Gallargues-le-Montueux; Garons; Garrigues-Sainte-Eulalie; Générac; Jonquières-Saint-Vincent; Junas; Langlade; Lecques; Lédignan; Lézignan; Lioux; Logriat-Florian; Lussan; Manduel; Marguerittes; Martignargues; Martigues-Les-Gardon; Massanes; Massillargues-Attuech; Maussargues; Mèjannes-Les-Alès; Meynes; Milhaud; Mons; Montagnac; Montmirail; Montpezat; Moulezan; Moussac; Mus; Nages-et-Solorgues; Ners; Nîmes; Orlhac-Sérignac-Quillan; Parignargues; Poux; Puechredon; Quissac; Redessan; Remoulins; Ribaute-les-Tavernes; Rochefort-Du-Gard; Rodilhan;
Municipalities partially covered by the geographical area: Allègre; Beaucaire; Bellegarde; Goudargues; Saint-Gilles; Vauvert; Verfeuil.

The Departement of Hérault:
Assas; Baillargues; Beaulieu; Boisseron; Buzinargues; Campagne; Castries; Claret; Fontanès; Galargues; Garrigues; Gutzargues; Lauret; Lunel; Lunel-Viel; Matelles (les); Montaud; Moulés-et-Baucels; Restinclières; Saint-Bauzille-De-Montmel; Saint-Brès; Saint-Christol; Saint-Croix-de-Quintillargues; Saint-Drézéry; Saint-Geniès-Des-Mourgues; Saint-Hilaire-de-Beauvoir; Saint-Jean-de-Cornies; Saint-Jean-de-Cuculles; Saint-Mathieu-de-Tréviers; Saint-Seriès; Saint-Vincent-de-Barbeyrargues; Saturargues; Saussines; Sauteyrargues; Sussargues; Vaquieres; Valargues; Vallaunès; Véragues; Villetelette.

5. Link with the geographical area:
5.1. Specificity of the geographical area:

Natural environment

The production area is characterised by hills and slopes, generally lower than 350 metres in altitude. The land is largely made up of tertiary molasse, cretaceous limestone and limestone clay, and alluvial terraces. The climate is Mediterranean with very dry summers and heavy rainfall in autumn. The region is affected by winds, particularly the mistral from the north, and can be subject to harsh winters.

History

The presence of olive trees since antiquity shows the close relationship between the Nîmes region and olive-growing.

Oil has been produced in this region since ancient times, but the widespread production and consumption of green table olives is more recent, dating from the 18th century. It was the perfection of a debittering method by the Piccolini brothers that allowed the development of production: by mixing wood ash (oak and olive wood) and lime water, the Piccolini brothers obtained an alkaline solution that could debitter green olives. This method was widely taken up by olive preservers, particularly in Nîmes, and all green olives debittered using the Piccolini method became known as Picholines.

It is thought that, subsequently, the name Picholine was given to a type of olive tree selected from the Plant de Collias variety, which originated in Collias, a municipality in the geographical area of the designation, and which is particularly suited to the Piccolini method introduced at the time: selection from the tree of the most fine, firmest olives suitable for this method.

In the second half of the 19th century, chemists developed sodium hydroxide, making it possible to debitter olives in greater quantities, thus encouraging the establishment of ‘industrial’ preserving plants.

However, the 19th century saw the decline of olive growing in the face of competition from vine growing and imports of other oils and fats. The decline continued until the Second World War, when the shortage of imported oils and fats caused by five years of conflict encouraged renewed interest in olive-oil production.
In 1945, there were 22 preserving plants near Nîmes, treating 2 000 tonnes of Picholine olives, and numerous olive markets.

The great frost of 1956 decimated olive groves in the Nîmes region.

The taste of the fruit and the botanical properties of the tree have helped spread the Picholine beyond its area of origin, particularly after the frost of 1956 when the variety was declared to be of national interest and replanted everywhere.

Nevertheless, Gard still produces more green Picholine olives than any other department (23 % of national production). This is undoubtedly because the hardness of the Picholine variety makes it perfectly suited to the soil and climate conditions of the designation’s production region. In the Nîmes basin, where the variety originated, the majority of trees are of the Picholine variety, while other local varieties can be found in the Cévennes foothills. In Collias and the surrounding villages, Picholine trees more than 200 years old can be seen.

5.2. Specificity of the product:

The ‘Olive de Nîmes’ is traditionally prepared in the area of origin of the Picholine using the traditional method of reduced lactic fermentation, i.e. whole olives are macerated in an alkaline solution of potash or soda of a density of not more than 1 032.

After soaking until the olives have been partly debittered, the alkaline solution is replaced with clean drinking water.

The olives are soaked in water for at least 36 hours and are rinsed a minimum of four times.

The olives are then placed in sea salt brine of a maximum density of 1 060. The use of citric acid and lactic acid is authorised to reduce the pH of the brine to 4.7.

This production method gives the ‘Olive de Nîmes’ its crunchy texture and its buttery and typically and hazelnut flavour.

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):

Know-how regarding grove management and processing has been passed down during the long history of olive production in the Gard.

The Picholine variety demonstrates a certain resistance to the winter cold and its solidly attached fruits resist the strong winds of autumn. In addition, the fact that the variety can be used for the production of both olive oil and table olives has increased its attractiveness to growers.

The constraints imposed by the natural environment have given rise to a characteristic method of training the trees:

— the trees are traditionally kept short, both to facilitate the green harvesting of table olives and to resist the wind,

— work to create olive-growing parcels has also helped shape the landscape, with its numerous low-walled terraces, traditionally known as ‘faisse’ or ‘banquaou’, to retain the scanty soils where slopes are too steep.

Traditionally, harvesting was between September (for table olives) to December (for oil) and occupied a large workforce, which according to the local expression ‘allait oliver’ (went oliving).
Harvesting is mainly carried out by hand, since Picholine olives are well attached to the stem and mechanical harvesting could damage them.

In addition, the configuration of traditional olive groves (small area, presence of low walls, and often limited accessibility) is not suited to mechanisation.

The olives are prepared using the traditional method of reduced or partial lactic fermentation, i.e. the process is arrested before the solution reaches the stone.

Fermentation is traditionally used in the area to preserve the colour of the fruit, its particular flavour, the absence of tartness and its crunchiness.

The cultivation of this olive has overcome many difficulties, but because the variety is so well adapted to the soil and people are attached to this original product and because of the know-how of local olive preservers the Olive de Nîmes has held on and is now being positively revalued by both producers and consumers.

Reference to the publication of the specification:
http://www.inao.gouv.fr/repository/editeur/pdf/CDC-AOP/olive-de-nimes.pdf