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

(2012/C 367/06)

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 from the date of this publication.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006
‘STROMBERGER PFLAUME’
EC No: DE-PDO-0005-0841-03.01.2011
PGI ( ) PDO ( X )

1. Name:
‘Stromberger Pflaume’

2. Member State or third country:
Germany

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

3.2. Description of product to which the name in point 1 applies:
Only fruit produced from damson trees in the geographical area may be referred to as ‘Stromberger Pflaume’. The damson (‘Hauszwetschge’ in German) is a very old, medium late variety of Prunus domestica subsp. domestica and is also known as a ‘Zwetsche’ or ‘Quetsche’ in Germany and as a ‘Zwetschke’ in Austria. The damson is a subspecies of plum. The plum is a member of the Rosaceae family and is a stone fruit. A damson is not as round as a plum; it is clearly pointed at the end, is a darker blue in colour, has a more noticeable seam and is easier to separate from the stone.

The fruit becomes fully ripe in the period from the end of August to mid-September, by which time it has developed an even colour. It is a longish oval-shaped fruit of medium size compared to other damson varieties. It measures at least 24 mm in diameter. The core is a flat oval of medium brown colour. The flesh is fine-grained and turgescent, of a uniform yellowish to orange colour. When the fruit is ripe, the flesh is easily separated from the stone. Each plum weighs up to 30 g. The ratio between the mass of the flesh and that of the stone is at least 3:1. Fresh, fully ripened plums have a total sugar content of at least 6 %.

The ‘Stromberger Pflaume’ is characterised by its mildly aromatic taste, with a good balance between sweetness and acidity, and by its low water content. It presents no tendency to acidity.

3.3. Raw materials (for processed products only):

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

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

All steps of the production process, from the planting of the saplings (two-to three-year-old trees) and shape pruning during the growth phase to the harvesting of the fruit, as well as the sorting and loading of the fruit in receptacles for transport or sale, must take place in the geographical area. The ‘Stromberger Pflaume’ is mainly grown on tall-stemmed trees.

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

3.7. Specific rules concerning labelling:

4. Concise definition of the geographical area:

The district of Stromberg in the municipality of Oelde plus a 500-m wide zone running along the district boundary. Due to this 500-m wide zone the area includes small parts of the municipalities of Wadersloh (Warendorf district), Langenberg (Gütersloh district) and Rheda-Wiedenbrück (Gütersloh district).

5. Link with the geographical area:

5.1. Specificity of the geographical area:

The main factors affecting the quality and aroma of the plums are the high-altitude local climate, the wet growing season, the topography of the land, especially the slope, and the quality of the soil combined with its hydrology, particularly the level of ground water. In addition, there is a very long tradition of damson growing in the production area, which has resulted in special production skills.

(a) Soil characteristics

The production area is particularly well suited to plum growing. Broadly speaking, it is part of the North German Plain. It is located in the Münsterland Lowlands (or 'Westphalian Lowlands'), a lowland range with individual higher areas located between the Teutoburg Forest and the northern fringe of the Rhenisch Slate Range. The Beckum Hills are in this lowland area. The growing area for the ‘Stromberger Pflaume’ is located in the eastern part of one of these higher-lying areas at an altitude of 90 m to 151 m above sea level.

The soil layers in the Beckum Hills and in the production area go down to a depth of 1.50 m to 2.00 m and predominantly overlay clay-marl stone. At some locations beneath this, we find massive rock in the form of Jura shale permeated by powerful aquifers with water which is under pressure in some places and emerges at ground level at spots with a particular soil formation. Above it there is a layer of loamy clay and marl 3 dm to 5 dm thick which is itself covered by a layer of raw, strong to heavy loam, some of it clayey and limey, 2 dm to 5 dm thick. The upper layer of 2 dm to 3 dm is composed of light sandy to strong loam containing humus. This deep and heavy soil structure keeps the moisture in the soil for a very long time even in dry years.

(b) The climate

The Westphalian Lowlands lie in an area with a maritime climate characterised by cool summers and mild winters. The climate is essentially influenced by the North Sea and the adjoining upland areas (Teutoburg Forest, Egge Range, Sauerland). Sufficiently moist and warm masses of air are brought in by the predominantly westerly and north-westerly winds. The average precipitation is 767 mm (1976: 561 mm; 1998: 998 mm). The long-term (1961-1990) average monthly air temperatures in the Westphalian Lowlands, which open out to the Atlantic, are above freezing, around 1.5 °C in January, the coldest month of the year, rising to around 18 °C in July, the warmest month of the year.
In the growing area of Stromberg, the annual average air temperature is around 10 °C, half a degree below the Westphalian Lowlands average (10.5 °C) due to the altitude of the Beckum Hills.

(c) Human factors

There has been a tradition of plum growing in Stromberg since about 1790. In bygone days, the hilly countryside provided farmers with ideal land for grazing and growing plum trees as ploughing on the slopes was extremely difficult. In the past, the plum trees stood in orchards and border rows; today they tend to be planted in plantations.

5.2. Specificity of the product:

(a) Main characteristics

Measuring at least 24 mm in diameter, the 'Stromberger Pflaume' is rather small compared to other damson varieties.

The plum is juicy without being watery and has a fresh sweet taste with a touch of fine mild acid. This makes the fruit ideal for eating fresh. The high sugar content and the ease with which the flesh can be separated from the stone also make the 'Stromberger Pflaume' ideal for further processing, be it cooking, baking, drying or flaming. Thanks to its firm consistency the 'Stromberger Pflaume' has excellent baking properties. It does not run when baked, and the skin does not become tough or form acids when heated. Due to its low water content in comparison to other damson varieties, the time needed for drying is considerably shorter. It owes its aroma not only to a higher content of soluble solids but also to a higher ratio of soluble solids to acids. The fruit has an even colour spread.

(b) The product is held in high esteem

Given its aromatic taste and its suitability for processing, the 'Stromberger Pflaume' is well known way beyond the city limits. According to an article published in Die Glocke on 4 October 1940, up to 2 500 tonnes of plums would be sold in the Ruhr area and the Münsterland when harvests were good. When considering these figures, it should be borne in mind that Stromberg today has just 4 600 inhabitants and covers an area of approx. 23.75 km². In 2000, a very good year, about 1 500 tonnes were harvested.

On account of the considerable interest shown in the 'Stromberger Pflaume', a Stromberg Plum Market was held for the first time in 2004. This has become a popular event, drawing a crowd of some 15 000 visitors to Stromberg every year. Germany's first 'Plum Queen' was crowned in 2004 at the 1st Stromberg Plum Market. The history of the product bears testimony to the high esteem in which it is held and confirms that its special characteristics really do exist:

Ludwig Niedieck started the tradition of plum growing in Stromberg around 1790 (150 years before 1940: Johan Koberg, ‘Die Stromberger Zwetsche im Wandel der Zeit’ (Stromberg damsons down the ages), published in Die Glocke on 4 October 1940). He was reputedly a merchant who imported a number of plum trees from the south of France and there is much evidence to support this theory. To quote an article by Elisabeth Reckmann entitled 'Damals als die Dörrofen rauchten' ('Back in the days when smoke came from the drying ovens') (local stories published in Die Glocke, 17 October 1972):

'A few trees estimated to be 200 years old are said to have stood on the slope along a path from Bettmann's farm to the fifth station of the cross. The sprouted seedlings were soon used in gardens and along roads and paths. The new plantings developed into a closed-up stand of trees (...).’

An article entitled 'Stromberger gründen einen Pflaumenverein' (Stromberg residents set up a plum association) published in the Westfälische Nachrichten on 20 October 1949 tells the story of Franz Stanlein and Heinrich Hungerkötter, both of whom were born in Stromberg but whose fate had taken them to Warendorf, 25 km away. From about the end of the 19th century up until the 1930s, they would return every year by horse and cart to Stromberg to fetch Stromberg plums for themselves and for many others in Warendorf. In 1931 they even set up their own association for this purpose, the 'Verein der Pflaumenbrüder'.

In 1818, when the small town of Stromberg had a population of 1 341, it already had 30 000 plum trees (article entitled ‘Alte Tradition mit lila Früchtchen treibt Blüten aus’ (An old tradition with purple fruit is beginning to blossom), published in Die Glocke on 28 August 1992). In 1940 Stromberg was, relatively speaking, the German town with the most fruit trees (Die Glocke, 4 October 1940, 'Die Stromberger Zwetsche im Wandel der Zeit' (Stromberg damsons down the ages).
The plum’s reputation is also confirmed by the fact that a distillery in the protected area produces a brandy, ‘Stromberger Pflaumenbrand’, and a plum liqueur from the ‘Stromberger Pflaume’, attention to which is drawn in its advertising.

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 ‘Stromberger Pflaume’ owes its quality and characteristics, including its reputation, chiefly to the geographical conditions in the production area and to natural and human factors. They are Stromberg’s ‘trade mark’, as accurately reported in the article entitled ‘Alte Tradition mit lila Früchtchen treibt Blüten aus’ (‘An old tradition with purple fruit is beginning to blossom’), published in Die Glocke on 28 August 1992. The plum’s special taste and uniform colour can be attributed to the characteristics of the soil and the climate.

(a) Geological factors

The hilly landscape and the deep humus clay soil are beneficial to plum growing in many ways. The trees are firmly and deeply rooted in the heavy soil, and thanks to the high lime and nutrient content, neutral pH value and abundance of water in the soil the trees are slowly but surely supplied with humidity and thus also with easily assimilated primary minerals. This contributes to enhancing the aroma and taste quality of the ‘Stromberger Pflaume’.

It also has an effect on the temperature, heat conductivity and heat capacity of the local soils, which heat up and cool down more slowly than other soils, thereby acting as a buffer against temperature variations. This favourably affects the microclimate.

Thanks to the slope of the land, which distinguishes the production area even from the adjoining, mainly flat land of Westphalia, and to the hydrological conditions, the relatively abundant rainfall does not result in waterlogging, which could cause the trees to die. Rather, the relatively low water permeability of the soil and the predominance of slopes accelerate the water run-off (preventing waterlogging), which has a positive effect on the fruit’s water content and the concentration of its specific aroma.

The deep and heavy soil, with its ability to retain moisture not only in humid but also in dry years, provides the roots of the plum trees with a steady water supply, ensuring, on the one hand, that the ‘Stromberger Pflaume’ does not store water and therefore has a firm consistency, and on the other hand that it remains juicy even in dry periods.

(b) Climatic factors

The relatively abundant annual rainfall releases important minerals from the soil and makes them available to the plum trees, with the result that the fruit becomes particularly juicy.

The mild climate, especially during the colder months of the year, means that the trees grow well and blossom early in spring. Because the summer season is not particularly warm at these altitudes, the period of ripening is rather long compared to other fruit-growing areas in Westphalia or in southern Germany or southern Europe. During this long ripening period, fructose and fine fruit aromas develop as a result of exposure to sunshine and then to low night-time temperatures owing to the high altitude of the area; this gives the ‘Stromberger Pflaume’ its typical, intrinsic and particularly aromatic taste. The temperature variations between night and day, which for reasons of altitude are much larger than in other fruit-growing areas, including those in the immediate vicinity, give the ‘Stromberger Pflaume’ a deeper colour than damson produced elsewhere.

(c) Human factors which affect the ‘Stromberger Pflaume’, its characteristics and the high esteem in which it is held

In order to present its long plum-growing tradition to the public, Stromberg has, for several years now, held a plum market whose success attests to the quality of the ‘Stromberger Pflaume’. 
The production of the 'Stromberger Pflaume' today owes much to individual growers who, through simple but effective innovation in growing and harvesting methods, have developed a crop which is optimally adapted to the land. Not only do such innovative steps represent a successful compromise between new growing requirements on the one hand and tradition and local culture on the other; they have also helped reduce operating costs for example through plantation growing, the use of technical aids in pruning the trees or the use of modern harvesting techniques. Cultivating slopes that are difficult to access with modern machinery has proven a particular challenge, requiring slopes to be transformed into terraces and machinery to be adapted to the terrain.

Reference to publication of the specification:
(Article 5(7) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)
Markenblatt Vol. 11 of 19 March 2010, Part 7a-aa, p. 4243
http://register.dpma.de/DPMAreister/geo/detail.pdfdownload/13350