

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

(2009/C 320/20)

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.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006

'HESSISCHER HANDKÄSE', 'HESSISCHER HANDKÄS'

EC No: DE-PGI-0005-0618-06.07.2007

PGI (X) PDO ()

1. Name:

'Hessischer Handkäse', 'Hessischer Handkäs'

2. Member State or third country:

Germany

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff:

3.1. Type of product:

Class 1.3: cheese

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

'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' denotes small cheeses which were originally formed by hand and so became palm-sized. 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' is to be classed among the sour milk cheeses. Sour milk cheeses are made primarily from sour milk quark produced only by acidification (without rennet).

'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' can take the form of smeared acid curd cheese (yellow cheese) with mould formation. In the latter case, the extent of the mould formation varies. The characteristic whole-cheese shape of 'Hessischer Handkäse' is determined by its traditional production. Each cheese weighs between 20 g and 125 g. 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' is produced only in the low-fat category.

'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' has the following characteristics:

(a) As smeared acid curd cheese (yellow cheese):

Exterior	smooth surface with golden-yellow to red-brown spread, fat, shiny appearance
Interior	white to slightly yellow in colour
Consistency	soft to firm, even ripeness from the outside inwards
Smell and taste	pure, spicy to piquant

(b) As smeared acid curd cheese (yellow cheese) with lactic mould formation (home-made):

Exterior	slightly yellow with white lactic mould layer, also one-sided, sometimes an uneven to wrinkly skin
Interior	white to yellow in colour, matt cut surface
Consistency	soft, even ripeness from the outside inwards
Smell and taste	pure, mild to slightly aromatic

The composition of 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' depends on the raw material: sour milk quark. Table 1 shows the main substances contained in 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs'.

Table 1

Composition of 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' (main substances)

	Proportion (in %)
Fat in dry mass	1,1-2,3
Protein	26,6-37,7
Carbohydrates	< 1
Water	55,2-68,6

3.3. Raw materials (for processed products only):

The raw material for 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' is sour milk quark. As the main ingredient for the cheese, it is of central importance. It is produced exclusively from cow's milk. Further ingredients are ripening salts, table salt (possibly iodinated), caraway, depending on the recipe variation, possibly casein and the pure cultures (red smear cultures).

In order to produce 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' the sour milk quark used must have the following characteristics:

Appearance	white
Consistency	soft, but granular, slightly gritty, not oily
Smell and taste	pure, lactic sour
Dry mass	at least 32 %
pH value	< 4,2

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

—

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

Production of 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' takes place in the geographical area.

Production consists of the following stages:

- blending and grinding of the individual batches of sour milk quark,
- mixing with the ingredients such as ripening salts, table salt, possibly caraway, as well as the ingredients and cultures required for the respective types 'smeared acid curd cheese' or 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' with lactic mould formation,
- forming of the cheeses,
- ripening of the cheese in the sweating room followed by post-ripening until the 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' is packaged.

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

The fully ripened cheese is packaged at the makers in the geographical area, since the cheese cannot be taken to other regions for packaging, as the quality of these small cheeses, each weighing at most 125 g, would suffer a great deal if they were transported unpackaged. Their surface would dry out during transport from the maker to another packaging firm. There would also be an excessively high risk of bacteriological infection during transport to the new packaging firm.

3.7. *Specific rules concerning labelling:*

—

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

The federal state of Hessen

5. **Link with the geographical area:**

5.1. *Specificity of the geographical area:*

'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' has been produced for centuries in a traditional manner on farms. The recipes and production methods have been maintained over time in Hessen's cheese factories and, adapted to modern requirements in sour milk cheese making, use the traditional production method.

The first historical mention of 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' was in 1813, when people from the town of Gross Gerau sold their hand-formed cheese on the market in Mainz.

As production increased, 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' became a staple food for ordinary people. The economic and cultural significance of 'Hessischer Handkäse' was underlined by the invention of the cheese machine in 1893. This invention, by Peter Traiser II from Gross Gerau, enabled production of 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' to be further increased. The Hüttenberger Land region, now in the Lahn-Dill District, was and still is a centre of production. From as early as 1835 onwards the local chronicle of Hochelheim municipality reported that trading with cheese brought money into the village.

Over time a separate tradition has developed around the way 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' is eaten. One of the region's best-known variants involves placing the cheese in a special marinade of onions, vinegar and oil to produce so-called 'Handkäs mit Musik'. The traditional recipes for both production and consumption and the name 'Hessischer Handkäs'/'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' have been retained up to the present day.

'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' is now produced in a few small and medium-sized artisanal cheese factories. They produce the speciality using traditional recipes and methods, adapted to modern technologies.

5.2. *Specificity of the product:*

'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' is highly regarded in Hessen and neighbouring areas and is known as a typical Hessen dish. Every inn in Hessen simply has to offer both 'Äbbelwoi' (cider) and 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs'. Its major significance for the people of Hessen, both as a food and as an economic factor, led in the past to 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' acquiring a special status in the region. 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' therefore occupies a position of very special importance as part of Hessen's food culture and in the public's mind as a high-quality foodstuff. Today it is still regarded as typical of Hessen. Respect is paid to 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' as Hessen's best-known food through the television programmes 'Handkäs mit Musik', which reports about Hessen's culinary delights. The uniqueness of 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' derives from the long experience of the Hessen cheese dairies in obtaining the best characteristics from each batch of sour milk quark in order to emphasise the best properties of the quark. This increases quality and ensures a uniformly high quality primary product. The traditional artisanal production and the experience contribute to the uniqueness and special nature of 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs'. 'Traditional production' means the selection, individual composition and mixing of individual batches of sour milk quark from different quark manufacturers into a production batch for 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs'. This method ensures a raw material that is almost completely homogeneous. The formed cheeses are ripened for 2-3 days, the temperature in the sweating room rising from about 18 °C to about 30 °C at the end of ripening. This 'traditional method' gives the cheese a stronger flavour.

The uniqueness and special character of 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs', above all the version with 'Musik', means that it is known as a Hessen speciality beyond the region's borders.

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 long tradition of making the product in Hessen, the resulting special know-how of Hessen's cheese factories which guarantees high quality and the rooting of 'Hessischer Handkäse'/'Hessischer Handkäs' in gastronomy in Hessen as the region's typical dish have made it a well-known and popular regional speciality.

Reference to publication of the specification:

<http://register.dpma.de/DPMAregister/geo/detail/30599015.2>
