

OTHER ACTS

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

(2009/C 131/16)

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 of the date of this publication.

SUMMARY

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006**'ARZÚA-ULLOA'****EC No: ES-PDO-0005-0497-27.09.2005****PDO (X) PGI ()**

This summary sets out the main elements of the product specification for information purposes.

1. Responsible department in the Member State:

Name: Subdirección General de Calidad Agroalimentaria y Agricultura Ecológica. Dirección General de Industrias y Mercados Agroalimentarios. Secretaría General de Medio Rural del Ministerio de Medio Ambiente, y Medio Rural y Marino de España

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2. Group:

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Composition: Producers/processors (X) Other ()

3. Type of product:

Class 1.3. Cheese

4. Specification:

(summary of requirements under Article 4(2) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)

4.1. *Name:*

'Arzúa-Ulloa'

4.2. *Description:*

Cheese made from raw or pasteurised cow's milk which, following a production process encompassing the stages of coagulation, cutting and washing of the curd, moulding, pressing, salting and maturation, acquires the following characteristics:

Arzúa-Ulloa: Maturation period of at least six days. Its shape may be either convex or cylindrical, its edges rounded, its diameter between 100 and 260 mm and its height between 50 and 120 mm. The cheese can never be taller than the length of its own radius. It may weigh between 0,5 and 3,5 kg. The rind, which is thin and elastic, is of medium to dark yellow in colour and shiny, clean and smooth. The cheese may be put up for sale with a transparent colourless slimicide. The paste is uniform in colour, ranging from ivory white to pale yellow; it is shiny, with no cracks, although it may have a small number of small angular or rounded eyes irregularly distributed through it.

Its aroma is milky, reminiscent of the smell of butter and yoghurt, with light hints of vanilla, cream and hazelnut. Its taste is essentially of milk, slightly salty and medium to low acidity. The texture is fine, slightly to averagely moist, not too firm and of medium elasticity. In the mouth it is averagely firm, soft and soluble and of medium springiness.

The analytical characteristics of the finished product are: Fat content: minimum 45 % of dry matter; protein: minimum 35 % of dry matter; pH: between 5,0 and 5,5; dry matter: minimum 45 %; and water content expressed as a percentage of the fat-free matter: minimum 68 % and maximum 73 %.

Farm-manufactured Arzúa-Ulloa: Made from cow's milk entirely sourced from cows from the farm in which the cheese is made. Its physical and analytical characteristics are the same as those set out in the section above.

Cured Arzúa-Ulloa: Maturation period of at least six months. Its shape is convex or cylindrical, its upper surface may be concave, its diameter is between 120 and 200 mm and its height between 20 and 100 mm. It may weigh between 0,5 and 2 kg. The rind is not differentiated, is deep yellow in colour and shiny and greasy in appearance; it may be covered with a transparent colourless slimicide. The paste is deep yellow in colour, paler towards the centre, very compact and may have a few eyes.

Its aroma is very intense and milky, smelling strongly of slightly rancid butter. The smell is pungent and sharp. The flavour is salty, not very acid and of medium to low bitterness. It is mostly reminiscent of butter, with light vanilla and nut notes which may vary between the centre and the outer edge. The overwhelming sensation is one of sharpness. The aftertaste is bitter and of butter and vanilla.

Its texture is hard and difficult to cut, and may have some fissures, mostly towards the edges, which will be drier. It feels homogenous and very compact to the touch. It is high in fat content and low in moisture.

The analytical characteristics of the finished product are: Fat content: minimum 50 % in the dry matter; pH: between 5,1 and 5,4; dry matter: minimum 65 %.

4.3. *Geographical area:*

The area for producing the milk and making the cheeses covered by the Protected Designation of Origin 'Arzúa-Ulloa' comprises the following municipalities:

- province of A Coruña: Arzúa, Boimorto, Pino (O), Touro, Curtis, Vilasantar, Melide, Santiso, Sobrado, Toques, Frades, Mesía, Ordes, Oroso, Boqueixón and Vedra,
- province of Lugo: Antas de Ulla, Monterroso, Palas de Rei, Carballedo, Chantada, Taboada, Friol, Guntín and Portomarín,
- province of Pontevedra: Agolada, Dozón, Lalín, Rodeiro, Silleda, Vila de Cruces and Estrada (A).

The soil and weather conditions of the defined area are ideal for the development of natural meadows and growing foraging crops which have traditionally sustained a significant herd which, at present, is essentially intended for milk production.

4.4. *Proof of origin:*

In order to check whether the requirements of the specifications and the quality manual have been complied with, the control body will be able to rely on the records maintained by the livestock farm, the first buyers (intermediaries in the chain between the livestock farms and the cheese dairies), cheese dairies and cheese maturing centres. Only milk obtained from holdings entered in the relevant register may be used for making cheese under the 'Arzúa-Ulloa' Protected Designation of Origin. Similarly, only cheeses made and matured in the cheese dairies and ageing facilities listed in the relevant registers may obtain the protection of the Protected Designation of Origin 'Arzúa-Ulloa'.

All natural or legal persons holding assets listed in these registers, as well as the facilities and their products will undergo this check in order to verify that products bearing the Protected Designation of Origin 'Arzúa-Ulloa' meet the requirements of the specification.

The checks will be based on inspections of farms and facilities, a scrutiny of documentation and an analysis of the raw material and the cheeses.

Where it is found that the raw material or the cheeses have not been obtained in accordance with the requirements of the specification or where they show significant defects or discrepancies with it, they may not be marketed under the 'Arzúa-Ulloa' Protected Designation of Origin.

Cheeses covered by the Protected Designation of Origin will bear a numbered secondary label checked by the inspection body in accordance with the rules laid down in the quality manual.

4.5. *Method of production:*

The cheese is made only from whole raw milk from Rubia Gallega, Pardo Alpina and Friesian cows or cross-breeds of the three on guaranteed holdings entered in the register of the Protected Designation of Origin. The livestock is fed mostly on fodder produced on the holding itself; feeding is by grazing, weather permitting. Concentrated feed of vegetable origin acquired from outwith the holding must be used only as a supplement to cover the energy needs of the livestock and must be sourced, so far as possible, from within the defined area.

The milk contains neither colostrum nor preservatives and must generally meet the requirements laid down by the relevant legislation.

The milk may not undergo any form of standardisation and must be stored at a temperature of not more than 4 °C in order to prevent the development of micro-organisms.

Production of the cheese involves the following procedures:

Coagulation: Coagulation is induced using animal rennet or other coagulation enzymes authorised in the quality manual, at temperatures of between 30 and 35 °C, for a period ranging from 30 to 75 minutes depending on the condition of the milk and the curdling process.

Cutting and washing of the curd: The curd must be cut to the size of a grain of maize (5 to 10 mm diameter). Washing then takes place in potable water to reduce the acidity of the curd so that the pH of the manufactured product is not less than the values set down in point 4.2.

Moulding: The cheese must be moulded in the shape of a cylinder the size of which must be such as to conform to the weights and measurements set down in point 4.2.

Pressing: The length of the pressing process varies according to the pressure applied and the size of the pieces.

Salting: Salting must be in the vat over the curds and/or by dipping the cheeses in brine. The latter must be kept refrigerated to avoid undesirable microbiological changes. Cheeses must remain in it no more than 24 hours.

Ageing: This process must take place on premises with a relative humidity level of between 75 and 90 % and a temperature of less than 15 °C.

The maturation period must be of six days from the end of the pressing process, or from the salting if the latter is by soaking in brine. In the case of cured cheeses, the minimum maturation period must be six months. During the period of maturation, the cheeses must be turned over and cleaned as necessary in order to acquire their special characteristics.

In order to safeguard the quality and traceability of the product, the protected cheeses should generally be marketed as whole cheeses, in the authorised packaging.

However, it may be possible to authorise marketing in portions, including cutting at the point of sale, provided that an appropriate monitoring system has been established for this purpose that guarantees the product's origin, quality and perfect conservation, avoiding all likelihood of confusion.

4.6. *Link:*

Historical:

Arzúa-Ulloa cheese is one of the Galician cheeses *par excellence*, to be found throughout central Galicia, although it was originally made in the south-eastern municipalities of A Coruña, western Lugo and north-eastern Pontevedra wit, depending on the area or historical period, different names being applied to the cheese, in particular: Arzúa, Ulla, A Ulloa, Curtis, Chantada, Friol or Lugo.

In the 'Inventario Español de Productos Tradicionales' (Spanish Inventory of Traditional Products), published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in 1996, the chapter on cheeses provides detailed information on Arzúa cheese, including its method of production and uses.

Other Ministry publications, such as the 1973 'catálogo de quesos españoles' (catalogue of Spanish cheese) or the 1993 'Alimentos de España- Denominaciones de Origen y de Calidad', mention the cheeses.

Natural:

The soil and weather conditions of the geographical and production area of the Arzúa-Ulloa cheese are ideal for the development of natural meadows and growing fodder crops which have traditionally sustained a significant herd which, at present, is essentially intended for milk production and, to a lesser extent, beef production.

As a result of the high level productivity in this agricultural sector, a significant agroindustrial sector has emerged which specialises in the manufacture of feed and of beef and dairy products, chief of which is cheese.

The causal link between the geographical environment and the specific characteristics of the cheese:

The geographical area in which 'Arzúa-Ulloa' cheese is produced is characterised by numerous open valleys surrounded by mountains, in which meadows and grazing land form an important part of the landscape. This area consists of the central districts of Galicia which are considerably high since most of it lies above 300 metres above sea level.

In these central Galician districts, the average temperature is slightly below 12 °C. Annual rainfall is around 1 200 to 1 700 mm so that, altogether, the production area of these cheeses is ideal for permanent meadows, pastures and various crops essential to a livestock diet that requires abundant rainfall.

This unique environment contributes to the distinctive characteristics of 'Arzúa-Ulloa' cheese in various ways:

- (a) Firstly, the geographical environment is favourable to the growth of abundant high quality fodder, composed of indigenous grasses (Timothy grass, creeping soft grass, fescue grass and ray grass) and pulses (lotus, clover and medick) suited to the area's moist, temperate conditions.
- (b) Additionally, milk is produced on small family farms, using traditional herd-management methods. Indigenous breeds still make up a significant proportion of herds and feed comes mainly from fodder produced on the farm, supplemented, when weather permits, by grazing.

Concentrated feedingstuffs are bought in — only when the usual types of feed are in short supply — as a supplement to cover the cattle's energy requirements; as far as possible, the feed is sourced in the defined area. This traditional model, in which the use of inputs bought in from outside the farm is kept to a strict minimum, contributes to the economic viability of these small family farms.

The characteristics of these farms make the milk produced on them ideal for cheese-making. It has been scientifically proven that these more natural systems of production and methods of feeding the cattle improve the nutritional qualities of the milk by increasing the CLA (conjugated linoleic acid) content and the omega-3 fatty acid content of its lipid profile, since the more herbage the cows eat, the more the content of these dietetically beneficial fats increases, influencing the qualities of the cheese.

- (c) Finally, the region's farmers are successors to a long tradition of producing this cheese, whose unique characteristics, which immediately identify it beyond the local market and have helped it gain a well-deserved prestige among consumers. The product was born out of the rural communities' need to preserve a foodstuff — milk — which is abundant in the area but which has a short lifespan. The purpose was twofold: self sufficiency and to make a longer lasting and more easily transported valuable product the sale of which would produce income for families. Unlike in other cheese-making areas, the countryside in these central Galician districts, where the countryside is ideal for the growing of fodder, milk production thus being guaranteed throughout the year, with and periods of short supply never very long. That is why cheese making techniques have tended to be based on short ageing periods of about a week, which is ample time for the product to develop a rind that would give it the requisite consistency to bear being carried to market, but which meant it had to be consumed within three or four weeks of production if its best qualities were to be enjoyed, such as its creaminess, its high moisture content and its milky aroma and flavour. These characteristics are related to the production process, in which the curd is cut very small (5 to 10 mm) so that the draining process is not very intense. This technique could have resulted in exceedingly acid cheeses as a result of the high milk content of the paste; however, the local *savoir faire* solved the problem by washing the curd, a technique unheard of in neighbouring cheese-making areas, which moreover serves to avoid undesirable secondary fermentation which could spoil the cheese.

The locals also devised a means of overcoming the seasonal nature of milk production; they solved the problem of shortages or a drop in the cheese-making quality of the milk during the summer by making cured Arzúa-Ulloa cheese from the surplus milk at the end of autumn and winter and subjecting it to a long ageing process of at least six months. This made it possible for those living in rural communities to have a high-energy nutritional food in the summer, when it was much appreciated since this was the time of year when the work in the fields required greater physical effort.

The area thus specialised in the production of a type of cheese which was very well suited to the circumstances of the place and the time: farmers were making cheese from daily milk surpluses which they then sold at the local weekly, fortnightly or monthly fairs.

4.7. *Inspection body:*

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INGACAL is a public body for which the Consellería del Medio Rural de la Xunta de Galicia is responsible.

4.8. *Labelling:*

Cheese marketed under the Protected Designation of Origin 'Arzúa-Ulloa', after being certified as conforming to this specification and the relevant rules, must carry the appropriate designation label, approved and issued by the inspection body, bearing a sequential alphanumeric code and the official logo of the Designation of Origin.

Both the commercial label and the designation label itself must bear the words 'Denominación de Origen Protegida "Arzúa-Ulloa"'. Furthermore, the label must indicate whether raw or pasteurised milk was used in the making of the cheese. Where 'Arzúa-Ulloa' cheese is of the 'de Granja' and 'curado' types, this may be indicated on the label.
