

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 315/09)

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

SINGLE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006

‘QUESO DE FLOR DE GUÍA’/‘QUESO DE MEDIA FLOR DE GUÍA’/‘QUESO DE GUÍA’

EC No: ES-PDO-005-0605-21.05.2007

PGI () PDO (X)

1. Name:

‘Queso de Flor de Guía’/‘Queso de Media Flor de Guía’/‘Queso de Guía’

2. Member State or Third Country:

Spain

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff:

3.1. Type of product (as in Annex II):

Class 1.3. Cheeses

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

General description

These types of cheeses have a markedly seasonal character and are firmly rooted in the traditional production system (lactation from January to July, when pasturage is available in the protected area and the milk is processed in the dairies, and then the dry period from August to December, when the transhumance takes place towards the island's summit in search of suitable pasturage). This is a fundamental characteristic and determines the production period, as it has always done traditionally.

The Protected Designation of Origin ‘Queso de Flor de Guía’/‘Queso de Media Flor de Guía’/‘Queso de Guía’ covers the following types of cheese:

‘Queso de Flor de Guía’: a full-fat or half-fat cheese made primarily from Canary Island sheep's milk, although mixing sheep's milk with other kinds of milk is permitted, provided that the following proportions are observed:

- milk from the Canary Island breed of sheep must make up at least 60 % of the total amount,
- the maximum proportion of milk from Canary Island cattle and crossbreeds thereof is 40 %,
- the maximum proportion of milk from any of the Canary Islands' breeds of goats is set at 10 %.

The main characteristic of this cheese is that the milk is curdled using only vegetable rennet made from the dried flower heads of the cardoon varieties *Cynara cardunculus* var. *ferocissima* and *Cynara scolymus*.

‘Queso de Media Flor de Guía’: a full-fat or half-fat cheese made primarily from Canary Island sheep's milk, although mixing sheep's milk with other kinds of milk is permitted, provided that the following proportions are observed:

- milk from the Canary Island breed of sheep must make up at least 60 % of the total amount,
- the maximum proportion of milk from Canary Island cattle and crossbreeds thereof is 40 %,
- the maximum proportion of milk from any of the Canary Islands' breeds of goats is set at 10 %.

It is characteristic of this type of cheese that the milk is curdled using at least 50 % vegetable rennet made from the dried flower heads of the cardoon varieties *Cynara cardunculus* var. *ferocissima* and *Cynara scolymus*.

'Queso de Guía': a full-fat or half-fat cheese made primarily from Canary Island sheep's milk, although mixing sheep's milk with other kinds of milk is permitted, provided that the following proportions are observed:

- milk from the Canary Island breed of sheep must make up at least 60 % of the total amount,
- the maximum proportion of milk from Canary Island cattle and crossbreeds thereof is 40 %,
- the maximum proportion of milk from any of the Canary Islands' breeds of goats is set at 10 %.

For this type of cheese, the milk is curdled using animal rennet and/or vegetable rennet (*Cynara cardunculus* var. *ferocissima*, *Cynara scolymus*) and/or other authorised starter cultures.

Based on the degree of maturity, the protected cheeses are classified as:

- 'semi-mature', if the maturing process lasts between 15 and 60 days; or
- 'mature', if the maturing process lasts longer than 60 days.

Physical and organoleptic characteristics

The physical and organoleptic characteristics of these cheeses are as follows:

'Queso de Flor de Guía':

Shape:	cylindrical.
Height:	4-6 cm.
Diameter:	between 15 cm and 30 cm.
Weight:	between 0,5 kg and 5 kg.
Rind:	cheeses that have been matured for a short period of time have quite a fine, elastic and soft external rind that is a dull, ivory-white colour and tends to be shaped like a flan. Cheeses that have been matured for longer have a harder, well-defined rind that is dark brown in colour. In both cases, the rind bears the imprint of the cheese mould on its base and has well-defined cloth marks on its smooth edges.
Body:	semi-mature cheeses have a very soft, cream-coloured body which is dense when cut and has a very creamy texture and a highly aromatic, acidic and bitter flavour, while mature cheeses have a hard, yellow-brown body which emits a pleasant odour when broken and has a bitter flavour and a sensation of sharpness.
Odour:	medium intensity, lactic, vegetal (cardoon and nuts).
Aromas:	medium-high intensity, with the same identifiers as for odour.
Elementary flavours:	bitter, salty and acidic flavours.

Trigeminal sensations:	mildly burning and astringent.
Aftertaste:	medium persistence.
Aroma durability:	medium.
Texture:	dense, compact and pasty cheeses.
'Queso de Media Flor de Guía':	
Shape:	cylindrical.
Height:	4-8 cm.
Diameter:	between 15 cm and 30 cm.
Weight:	between 0,5 kg and 5 kg.
Rind:	the colour and thickness vary depending on maturing time. Consequently, cheeses matured for a short period of time have a fine, ivory-coloured rind, while the most mature cheeses have a thicker, brown-coloured rind. The rind has smooth edges and bears the imprint of the cheese mould on its base.
Body:	the body of the cheese is ivory-white to yellow in colour, depending on how mature it is, compact when cut and creamy to very hard in texture, depending on maturity. It has a mildly acidic flavour with a slight sharpness.
Odour:	medium intensity, lactic, vegetal (cardoon and nuts), animal (rennet) and occasionally floral or with the smell of roasting.
Aromas:	medium-high intensity, with the same identifiers as for odour and with the aroma of the starter cultures.
Elementary flavours:	bitter, salty and mildly acidic flavour.
Trigeminal sensations:	mildly burning, sharp and astringent.
Aftertaste:	medium-low persistence.
Aroma durability:	medium-low.
Texture:	dense, compact and sometimes rubbery or creamy cheeses.
'Queso de Guía'	
Shape:	cylindrical.
Height:	4-8 cm.
Diameter:	between 15 cm and 30 cm.
Weight:	between 0,5 kg and 5 kg.
Rind:	both the thickness and the colour vary depending on the maturing time, so that semi-mature cheeses have quite a fine external rind that is ivory in colour, while the most mature cheeses have thick, dark-brown rinds, having passed through every shade of yellow in between. They bear the imprint of the cheese mould on their base and may or may not bear a symmetrical flower.
Body:	the colour of the cheese varies from ivory-white to yellow, while its consistency ranges from very soft to hard, although the cheeses are generally dense and compact when cut. Salty and acidic flavours predominate, and there may occasionally be a hint of bitterness and sharpness.

Odour:	medium intensity, predominantly lactic, followed by animal.
Aromas:	Medium intensity, with the same identifiers as for odour, with a particular emphasis on lactic aromas.
Elementary flavours:	above all a salty and acidic flavour, with a slight hint of bitterness detectable in some cheeses.
Trigeminal sensations:	predominantly a sensation of astringency, followed by burning, but at a medium to low level in both cases.
Aftertaste:	medium persistence.
Aroma durability:	medium-low to low.
Texture:	dense, compact and sometimes creamy cheeses.

Chemical characteristics

The chemical characteristics vary depending on the level of maturity and have the following minimum values:

‘Queso de Flor de Guía’:

Protein: 22,50 % (in dry matter).

Fat: 29,50 % (in dry matter).

Dry matter: 56,50 %.

‘Queso de Media Flor de Guía’:

Protein: 23,50 % (in dry matter).

Fat: 27,50 % (in dry matter).

Dry matter: 55,50 %.

‘Queso de Guía’:

Protein: 24,10 % (in dry matter).

Fat: 27,50 % (in dry matter).

Dry matter: 57,00 %.

3.3. Raw materials (for processed products only):

The raw materials used to produce each cheese are as follows:

Milk from Canary Island sheep must make up at least 60 % of the total amount.

The maximum proportion of milk from Canary Island cattle and crossbreeds thereof is 40 %.

The maximum proportion of milk from any of the Canary Islands' breeds of goats is set at 10 %.

The milk is curdled using vegetable rennet made from the dried flower heads of the cardoon varieties *Cynara cardunculus* var. *ferocissima* and *Cynara scolymus*, in the minimum quantities specified above.

The minimum parameters for the composition of the milk are as follows:

Sheep's milk:

Protein content: a minimum of 3,90 % (by weight).

Fat content: a minimum of 6,50 % (by weight).

Total dry matter: a minimum of 15,15 %.

Cows' milk:

Protein content: a minimum of 3,20 % (by weight).

Fat content: a minimum of 3,20 % (by weight).

Total dry matter: a minimum of 13,00 %.

Goats' milk:

Protein content: a minimum of 3,40 % (by weight).

Fat content: a minimum of 4,30 % (by weight).

Total dry matter: a minimum of 14,00 %.

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

For the sheep, grazing constitutes the principal source of feed. The wide variety of flora in the area and the presence of numerous endemisms are of particular interest, as they give the cheese its very particular organoleptic characteristics. Along with the practice of transhumance, this constitutes one of the main characteristics of this PDO.

The pastures grazed by the sheep are very varied and rich in native flora. The grassland designated as grazing pasture is of particular note and is associated with the intensive and productive historical use of the pastureland. The grazing pastures are populated by grasses of the *Poetea bulbosae* class, dominated by the grass known as bulbous meadow grass, along with various varieties of subterranean clover, which, together with *Poa pitardiana*, covers large swathes of the region.

Shrub thickets also form part of the sheep's diet, but to a lesser extent. These thickets are made up of legume species with high forage value, specifically tagasaste or tree lucerne and broom, both of which are varieties of flora native to the Canary Islands.

Grazing may be supplemented with concentrated feed if weather conditions have been poor. Sheep are given supplementary feed only during lactation and during the final stage of the dry period, when they come in for milking once a day, but this is limited to concentrated feed, as they obtain the fibre in their diet from grazing. The supplementary feed usually consists only of maize, although sometimes bran, oats and beet are also added.

As regards the practice of transhumance, once the sheep have stopped producing milk (dry period), which is usually between August and December, they are moved, by transhumance, to a larger area to graze. The practice of transhumance takes them outside the area covered by the PDO at times when no protected cheese is being produced. Consequently, for the cheeses to be protected, they must be produced between the months of January and July, when the sheep are grazing inside the protected area.

The cattle are fed intensively, but always with vegetation harvested by the farmer, as follows:

- (a) from May to October, with the crops sown by the farmer (maize, sorghum, cereals and fodder crops), as well as with whatever is growing in the fields at this time of year and is harvested by the farmer (e.g. reeds, chestnut-tree branches, tree lucerne, forage shrubs, etc.);
- (b) from October to April, the rains bring new vegetation, such as *miscleras*, cardoons, hedge mustard, tree lucernes and broom, which the cattle eat along with the various kinds of grasses growing in the fields at this time of year.

The above-mentioned feed is supplemented with concentrated feed, which is given to the cattle all year round, but in increased quantities and quality during the season when production is at its highest and pastures are less plentiful. The supplementary feed basically consists of flax, soya, maize, middlings and beet.

The goats are fed on the basis of intensive or semi-extensive farming.

The goats obtain the fibre in their diet inside the protected area from:

- fodder grown by the farmers on their agricultural land and given to the goats in the stable, the crops being, in decreasing order of importance, vetch, oats, maize, fodder kale, *Lathyrus*, rye, sorghum, etc.,
- the shrubs and grasses cut by the farmers in the fields, which vary depending on the season and are the same as those described above for the sheep,
- natural pasturage in the enclosed areas in which the herds are sometimes kept, which is the same as that described above for the sheep.

Concentrates are used as supplementary feed only at times of the year when lactation and milking take place. These concentrates basically contain maize, bran, oats and beet. They are administered once a day during the period in question.

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

All of the stages in the production of 'Queso de Flor de Guía'/'Queso de Media Flor de Guía'/'Queso de Guía' take place in the geographical area identified in the PDO, thus following traditional practice in the area.

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

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3.7. *Specific rules concerning labelling:*

For protected cheeses that have been made with raw milk obtained from the producer's own animals, this may be indicated on the label by means of the word 'artesano'.

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

The production area for milk suitable for the products covered by this Protected Designation of Origin coincides with the area in which processing and maturing take place and is restricted to three municipalities in the north-western district of Gran Canaria. These are as follows:

Gáldar: this area, which covers 67,6 km², has a perimeter which resembles a very irregular triangle with its apex facing the island's interior, at an altitude of more than 1 500 m above sea level.

Moya: located in the central part of northern Gran Canaria, this municipality covers an area of 36,3 km².

Santa María de Guía: covering an area of 37,72 km², this municipality is 1 500 m above sea level and slopes progressively down towards the coast at a steep gradient of more than 11,5 %.

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

5.1. *Specificity of the geographical area:*

'Queso de Flor de Guía'/'Queso de Media Flor de Guía'/'Queso de Guía' is produced only in three municipalities in the protected district. There have been flocks and herds of Canary Island breeds in these three municipalities since before 1526. Historians recounting the tradition of cheese-making in these municipalities bear witness to the tradition and to settlers living alongside these animals as a means of subsistence and trade.

The tradition of livestock farming and cheese-making still continues in the three municipalities in question, with approximately 100 livestock farms making farmhouse-made artisanal cheese using the traditional production methods.

The method used to produce 'queso de flor' is attributed to the old Castilian population which settled in the area that is now known as 'Altos de Guía' (the Guía highlands), which encompasses the important area of Gáldar's medium-altitude estates. The secret of why the livestock-farming and cheese-making tradition has continued is the isolation in which the inhabitants lived for centuries as a result of the precarious nature of the means of transport, being restricted to the use of bridle paths until almost the beginning of this century, which turned the community in on itself, as is logical in the almost total absence of communication. An additional factor is the tacit secret kept by producers of 'queso de flor, de media flor y de cuajo', which they guarded like a precious possession to be left only to their children.

The steep terrain and the absence of roads connecting the artisanal centres to any villages other than Guía favoured the creation of a small agricultural market there at the end of the 19th century, which was attended by farmers and cheese-makers from the surrounding area, essentially from the Altos de Guía, Moya and Gáldar.

5.2. Specificity of the product:

The first characteristic that gives the product its specificity is the proportion of milk from the various indigenous livestock breeds:

- at least 60 % sheep's milk from the Canary Island breed of sheep,
- a maximum of 40 % cows' milk, preferably from the Canary Island breed of cattle, although crossbreeds are also acceptable,
- a maximum of 10 % goats' milk from an indigenous breed.

The second characteristic that gives the product its specificity is the practice of grazing the sheep, whose milk makes up the largest percentage of that used to produce the cheese. Grazing necessarily gives the sheep a diet that includes plants native to the Canary Islands, which gives the milk that will be used to make the cheese particular distinctive and unique organoleptic characteristics.

Furthermore, although the goats and cattle are not usually grazed, the farmer gathers grass and fodder from inside the production area to serve as their basic feed, which is why the milk they produce has specific organoleptic characteristics resulting from that diet.

The third characteristic that gives the product its specificity is the fact that 'queso de flor' and 'queso de media flor' are made using vegetable rennets obtained from *Cynara cardunculus* var. *ferocissima* and *Cynara scolymus*, which grow wild in the production area.

It is these factors that give the cheeses their particular and unique organoleptic characteristics, namely their texture, flavour and aroma.

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 cardoon flower and the rennet give the cheese of the region its specific characteristics, as they are used only in this part of the island, producing what is known as 'Queso de Flor de Guía'. The type of rennet used is obtained from what is commonly known as cardoon flower, which is the dried flower head of one of the cardoon species that grows in the district in question, thus establishing a causal link between the geographical area and the quality or characteristics of the product.

Despite being relatively small, the mountainous nature of the geographical production area means that it has a wide range of microclimates. The area has a perimeter which resembles a very irregular triangle, with its apex facing the island's interior, and reaches an altitude of more than 1 500 m, which is another important factor in its climate.

The climatic conditions in the municipality of Santa María de Guía derive from its northern location, which covers three different altitudes, whereas Moya is influenced by its windward position and is more humid and rainy at medium altitudes and at the summit, while Gáldar, which is below 400 m in altitude, is drier. These microclimates give the cheeses their particular characteristics.

There are approximately 1 000 plant species growing wild in these municipalities, about 100 of which are endemic, which is the result of the microclimates and the different altitudes. Many of the species that grow wild here are native forage crops, such as broom, *miscleras*, cardoon, hedge mustard and tree lucerne, which form the principal source of feed for the livestock from January to July when they are in the geographical area, before they are moved elsewhere from August to December as part of the transhumance, giving the protected cheese the organoleptic and olfactory-gustatory characteristics that set it apart and link it to the environment in which it is produced.

To sum up, we can say that the characteristics that differentiate these protected cheeses are very closely linked to the geographical production area, which has a number of unique factors:

- (a) its indigenous breeds, namely the Canary Island breed of cattle, the Canary Island breed of sheep and any of the Canary Islands' breeds of goats (Majorera, Palmera or Tinerfeña), which are pure native Canary Island breeds, as recognised by law, and produce the milk used to make the cheeses;
- (b) rich and varied vegetation, with endemic species and high-quality grazing;
- (c) a long tradition of grazing livestock, which goes back to the 15th century and was continued by later settlers, for whom it became one of their principal means of support, thus making cheese-making into a traditional practice that has come down to us today;
- (d) a specific geographical location in the aforementioned district and a topography that favours a wide range of microclimates and allows the livestock to graze all year round;
- (e) a unique countryside characterised by extensive pastures and rural settlements with links to this economic activity;
- (f) a farming system that demonstrates that the production of this product is closely linked to the territory, the climate and the integration of its producers into the environment. Even when kept stabled, the animals are fed on grass and fodder grown and harvested by the farmer within the protected area.

Reference to publication of the specification:

<http://www.gobiernodecanarias.org/boc/2007/065/008.html>
