

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

(2010/C 188/10)

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

'ORAVSKÝ KORBÁČIK'

EC No: SK-PGI-0005-0774-04.05.2009

PGI (X) PDO ()

1. **Name:**

'Oravský korbáčik'

2. **Member State or third country:**

Slovak Republic

3. **Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff:**3.1. *Type of product:*

Class 1.3. Cheeses

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

'Oravský korbáčik' is a steamed cheese product, smoked or unsmoked, in the shape of a little whip (*korbáčik* in Slovak) between 10 and 50 cm long. It is made using a traditional method, whereby fermented, partially ripened lump cheese is steamed in hot water and then stretched into string-like strands, traditionally known as *vojky*, between 2 and 10 mm thick. The strands are then plaited together into the shape of a little whip.

The characteristic organoleptic properties of the cheese are imparted by the stringy texture of the strands pulled from the steamed cheese and by the special whip shape formed by plaiting the individual strands.

Smoked and unsmoked 'Oravský korbáčik' differ from each other mainly in colour and odour. Smoked 'Oravský korbáčik' is slightly yellow to golden yellow and has a characteristic smoky aroma and a slightly (1 %) higher salt content. Unsmoked 'Oravský korbáčik' is white to creamy white, without a smoky aroma. The texture and consistency of both varieties are identical.

'Oravský korbáčik' is sold in multipacks wrapped food-quality film which vary according to how many *korbáčiky* they contain and the weight of the packaging.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 93, 31.3.2006, p. 12.

Properties

Colour: white to slightly yellowish or, in the case of smoked varieties, golden yellow;

Consistency: the individual strands are made up of separate fibres with an elastic consistency that is firmish but not hard, the elasticity decreasing as the cheese matures; the high tensile strength of the product is due to the stringy texture imparted by the readily separating fibres;

Odour and taste: milky, pleasantly cheesy, savoury, mildly acidulous and, in the case of smoked varieties, characteristically smoky;

Composition: Dry matter: not less than 40 % by weight;

Fat content in the dry matter: not less than 25 % by weight;

Edible salt: no more than 4,5 % by weight for unsmoked varieties and no more than 5,5 % by weight for smoked varieties.

Microbiological properties

'Oravský korbáčik' is a steamed cheese made from lump cheese principally containing thermoresistant lactic acid microflora of the genera: *Lactococcus*, *Streptococcus* and *Lactobacillus*.

3.3. Raw materials (for processed products only):

'Oravský korbáčik' is made using lump cheese produced from raw cow's milk or pasteurised cow's milk with the addition of a lactic acid culture. The type of milk used — raw or pasteurised — has no bearing on the properties of the final product. The quality of the milk is regularly checked and recorded at the premises of the lump cheese producers, the following parameters being monitored: inhibitory substances, temperature, acidity, fat, specific weight and non-fat dry matter.

The total number of micro-organisms and the number of somatic cells are established by accredited laboratories.

The lump cheese contains at least 48 % dry matter by weight, with at least 35 % fat by weight in the dry matter and a pH of 4,9-5,2.

The exterior of the lump cheese is uninterrupted and smooth with an appropriate rind and a white to creamy colour.

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

There are no particular quality requirements or restrictions as regards origin.

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

The quality of the product is not dependent on the origin of the lump cheese.

Step 1: Steaming: the fermented natural cheese is first cut into smallish pieces, which are grated and steamed in hot water (water temperature 70-95 °C); the cheese is stirred using a wooden paddle or mechanical stirrer until it forms a compact elastic mass, known as *parenina*.

Step 2: Kneading: the *parenina* is kneaded, stretched and folded by hand to form a supple, smooth-textured cheese mass that can be readily shaped.

- Step 3: Shaping: the cheese mass is stretched into strands by hand or by using two grooved rolling pins rotated against each other. The strands then drop immediately into cold drinking water.
- Step 4: Cooling: the cheese strands are left to cool in the cold drinking water for 2-10 minutes, so that they keep their shape.
- Step 5: Winding: the cooled strands are wound onto a reel. After being wound, they are cut at one end and tied in the middle with a cheese strand.
- Step 6: Salting: the cut and tied strands are salted by dipping them in a saturated salt solution, so that the final salt content is no more than 4,5 % by weight for non-smoked varieties or 5,5 % by weight for smoked varieties (the salting time depends on the thickness of the cheese strands and the acidity of the cheese used).
- Step 7: Part-drying: in order to get rid of excess salty water, the cheese strands are hung on a wooden or rustproof pole for the water to drain off.
- Step 8: Plaiting: at least two strands, folded in half, are plaited by hand into the shape of a little whip along two-thirds of their length, at which point they are fastened together using one of the strands, to stop the plait coming undone.
- Step 9: (for smoked varieties)

Smoking: the cheese is smoked with direct cold smoke with a temperature of approximately 30 °C in a traditional wooden or metal smoking chamber or in a forced air circulation smoking chamber with hardwood smoke until it takes on a golden-yellow colour.

- Step 10: Packaging: the cheese is packed in food-quality film, which is then labelled with the name 'Oravský korbáčik'.

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

'Oravský korbáčik' is sold in packs containing different quantities. A basic pack contains 5-10 *korbáčiky*, but larger packs containing 50 *korbáčiky*, traditionally referred to as a *zväzok* (bundle), are also available.

'Oravský korbáčik' has to be packaged in the defined geographical area in order to preserve its special shape, to prevent unplaiting and to safeguard the quality of the product.

There is no geographical restriction on repackaging.

3.7. Specific rules concerning labelling:

Producers making 'Oravský korbáčik' in accordance with this specification are allowed to use the name 'Oravský korbáčik' for the purposes of labelling, advertising and marketing.

Labels affixed to the product must state the following:

- the name 'Oravský korbáčik', prominently positioned,
- whether the cheese is smoked or unsmoked,
- the words 'protected geographical indication' and the associated EC symbol.

4. Concise definition of the geographical area:

'Oravský korbáčik' is produced in the Orava river basin (in the Orava region) in the Slovak Republic. The geographical area is bounded by the border with Poland to the north and east, by the western border of the districts of Námestovo and Dolný Kubín and by the southern border of the districts of Dolný Kubín and Tvrdošín.

5. Link with the geographical area:

5.1. Specificity of the geographical area:

Orava is a typical mountain region with suitable conditions for raising and grazing sheep and cattle and processing the milk from them to make cheese. The people of the region continue to exploit these special features of the mountain environment, as they have done ever since the area was first settled. Plaiting steamed cheese by hand into the shape of little whips is a skill specific to the women of the Orava region that cannot be done by machine.

Oral tradition has it that domestic production of *korbáčiky* in Orava has been going on since the second half of the 19th century, the production of various types of steamed cheese, including *korbáčiky*, for sale being the only source of income for local sheep and cow farmers at the time.

5.2. Specificity of the product:

What makes 'Oravský korbáčik' special is its shape, which is very unusual for a cheese or cheese product. It is made using a traditional method that is almost exclusively manual, involving steaming lump cheese in hot water and then pulling it into strands that are subsequently plaited into the shape of a little whip. The kneading and stretching involved in the manual processing of the steamed cheese give the *korbáčiky* their unique stringy texture, which is what makes the product so special and unique.

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 application to register 'Oravský korbáčik' as a protected geographical indication is based on the special shape of the product, its reputation and tradition.

The Orava region is situated in the mountainous north-west of Slovakia, which has a cold, inhospitable climate. The majority of the inhabitants lived from farming and animal husbandry, keeping cows, goats and sheep, and they processed and transformed the raw materials which the animals provided, principally milk, into high-quality cheese products in different shapes. 'The Pinzgau cattle rearing area and the prevailing system of summer pasturage mean that this breed is ideally suited for the production of quality organic drinking milk and milk products. ... These farms, apart from significantly helping to shape the landscape (mowing of areas that are inaccessible to machinery, grazing of unused land, drying of hay on special racks), produce regional specialities from cow's milk, such as the well-known "Oravský korbáčik"...' (*Slovenský pinzgauský dobytok — producent mlieka horských pasienkov*).

The skill and ingenuity of the people of the region enabled them to endure its harsh conditions and gained them a reputation well beyond its borders.

Historical records report a traditional steamed cheese produced in the Orava region; it was made in the shape of a small whip, like the ones made from wicker that are traditionally woven in Slovakia at Easter, and the miniature cheese version acquired the name *korbáčik*. As well as producing *korbáčiky*, the area also became a centre for the buying and selling of steamed cheeses, the traders being named after the type of cheese they dealt in (*korbáčik* merchant, *oštiepok* merchant, *srdce* merchant etc.). 'In northern Slovakia the village of Zázrivá in the Orava region is still a significant centre of such trade. Traders from that region mainly traded in smoked and steamed cheese; they received names according to the type of products sold — *korbáčik* merchants, ...' (Podolák, J. 'Tradičné využitie produkcie ovčieho mlieka na Slovensku', *Etnologia Slavica*, UK Bratislava, 1986).

The historical records tell of various such professions. To this day, Orava *korbáčiky* traders still offer their goods for sale at various markets and on special occasions, such as weddings, christening parties, Christmas, carnivals and Easter. *Korbáčik* production has always gone up during these holiday periods, which is evidence of how popular the product is with consumers. This is borne out by the manufacturers' production records.

Orava still retains its agricultural character. Rules governing the production of 'Oravský korbáčik' were laid down as early as the middle of the last century. The reputation and tradition of 'Oravský korbáčik' are attested not only by the fact that it is covered by a trademark registered with the Industrial Property Office of the Slovak Republic, valid until 22 February 2006 (10 years), but also by the articles written about it in the press.

'Oravský korbáčik' is a well-known traditional delicacy not just for Slovaks, but also for foreigners visiting Slovakia, who take packets of the speciality back with them as gifts. 'I grabbed a local cheese delicacy known as an Oravský korbáčik (Orava Whip) at a stand ...' ('Great Escapes: Hiking in the High Tatras'. *The Slovak Spectator*, Vol. 10, No 28, 2004); 'Nenúkajte Angličanov Oravskými korbáčikmi' (<http://www.sme.sk>); *Slovakia-in*, No 8-9, 2002, in the article 'Slovensko a Slováci nemeckými očami' it is stated that 'The author, a Czech woman living in Germany, is familiar with the excellent steamed cheeses called Oravské korbáčiky, ...'.

Reference to publication of the specification:

(Article 5(7) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)

http://www.upv.sk/pdf/specifikorbac_ek2.pdf
