

Publication of the amended single document following the approval of a minor amendment pursuant to the second subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012

(2022/C 223/08)

The European Commission has approved this minor amendment in accordance with the third subparagraph of Article 6(2) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 664/2014 ⁽¹⁾.

The application for approval of this minor amendment can be consulted in the Commission's eAmbrosia database.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'Chorizo Riojano'

EU No: PGI-ES-0654-AM01 — 27.10.2021

PDO () PGI (X)

1. Name(s)

'Chorizo Riojano'

2. Member State or Third Country

Spain

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff

3.1. Type of product

Class 1.2. Meat products (cooked, salted, smoked, etc.)

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

'Chorizo Riojano' is an additive-free horseshoe-shaped chorizo sausage of the 'Extra' quality class made in the Autonomous Community of Rioja. It has the following characteristics:

3.3. Morphological characteristics

The PGI chorizos are horseshoe-shaped and more or less cylindrical, measuring 30-40 mm in diameter and weighing at least 200 g. Their consistency is firm and compact and they are usually wrinkly in appearance. They yield smoothly to the knife when cut and their contents are well combined. They are free of unusual colouring and the meat and fat morsels can be clearly told apart.

Physical and chemical characteristics

Moisture	45 % max.
Collagen/protein ratio	14 % max.
Fat percentage in dry matter	57,0 % max.
Nitrates expressed as NaNO ₃	100 ppm max.
Nitrites expressed as NaNO ₂	20 ppm max.
Total phosphates expressed as P ₂ O ₅	7 500 ppm max.

(the natural content of pork, without added phosphates)

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 179, 19.6.2014, p. 17.

Organoleptic characteristics

The aroma – predominantly of paprika with hints of garlic – is balanced, intense and persistent. There are no rancid or acrid odours. The taste is intense and lingering, with a good balance between lean meat and fat. There is very little sourness and no rancid or abnormal flavours. Chorizos made with hot paprika are spicy. The chorizos have a balanced texture, hold together well and are easy to chew, with little rubberiness.

Raw materials

Pork meat and fat that are particularly good for curing, including lean pork, free of connective tissue, from non-entire male pigs or from females, and rind-free pork belly or lean pieces of *lardeo* meat [the name used for the pork offcuts used for making cured products], seasoned with fine dry salt, paprika of the 'Extra' quality class and fresh peeled garlic and then stuffed into natural pig intestine casings.

The pork fat added to the mixture must be firm. This product cannot be made using soft, buttery pork belly fat that would become viscous when diced and cause the chorizos to ooze fat during the maturing and curing process. The amount of fat added must also be limited, never exceeding 57 % of dry matter. This is one of the key factors that differentiates 'Chorizo Riojano' from other chorizos, which experience an abrupt change in pH that makes them more difficult to properly mature and later preserve.

3.4. Feed and raw materials

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

Preparing the raw materials:

The meat processing plants that make 'Chorizo Riojano' must have the capacity to take delivery of carcasses and/or cuts of meat and handle them appropriately, avoiding any drops in pH or changes in colour and/or texture, and examining and testing the carcass or cut on delivery to ensure it is unimpaired.

Quartering, boning and cutting must take place as soon as possible, ensuring that meat does not pile up in the area in which these operations are performed.

The room in which the meat is handled must be air-conditioned to a temperature not exceeding 12 °C.

Refrigerating the meat and fat before mincing:

The cold rooms in which chilled carcasses are stored must have meat-hanging equipment that prevents the carcasses from touching.

Mincing the meat and fat to the size needed for each product:

'Chorizo Riojano' must be made at a different time and in a different location from all other products, including other categories of chorizo.

When ready for processing, the meat must be mature, acidified and not frozen, with a pH below 6,3, lending itself easily to curing and ensuring that the filling in the centre of the sausage can dry out.

It is equally important to ensure that the meat is not moist, letting the juices drain from the pork cuts if necessary.

Once the meat and fat are ready, a relatively intense process of mincing and dicing follows. The meat and fat must be sliced cleanly, as this minimises damage to the protein chains and adipose cells, which helps the meat morsels to bind together cohesively, ensures proper drying and ultimately gives the chorizo its characteristic appearance and the colour observed when it is cut open.

All production premises must be air-conditioned, with relative humidity and air circulation and renewal conditions that are appropriate from both a technological and a health and hygiene perspective.

Seasoning with salt, other ingredients and spices:

Fine dry salt, fresh peeled garlic and paprika of the 'Extra' quality class, plus cayenne pepper in the case of spicy chorizos, are added to the meat and fat after mincing.

Mixing and kneading the ingredients:

Once the raw materials have been minced and the other ingredients have been added, all the ingredients are mixed together, trying not to leave any pockets of air so that the ingredients can bind together and the resulting chorizo does not crumble when cut.

The next step, kneading in a vacuum tumbler, is essential for ensuring that the mince is sufficiently infused with the seasoning.

Resting and cooling the mixture:

After mincing, mixing and kneading, the mixture must be left to rest for 12-24 hours before being stuffed into the casings.

The chilling equipment used for this purpose must be separate from the rest and be set to a temperature of 0-6 °C.

Stuffing into natural pig intestine casings:

Once the mixture is ready, it is stuffed into natural pig intestine casings. The nozzles must be smooth and not too long in order to avoid raising the temperature. For the same reason, sufficient pressure must be used when filling the casings or else the sausages will be left with empty pockets which could result in the mixture becoming discoloured or mouldy.

The natural casings must be perfectly clean, with no signs of impairment, injury or disease that would make them unsuitable for human food use.

The casings must be washed beforehand to make them more elastic and help them to cling to the filling without separating from it or developing wrinkles.

Tying:

Once the casing has been filled with the meat mixture, it is tied up with white cotton twine – or red for spicy chorizos.

Maturing for a relatively long period:

For the maturing stage, the chorizos must be left hanging in ventilated premises with a temperature of 16 °C or less and suitable relative humidity and ventilation levels for the product to gradually dry out and acquire its characteristic consistency, aroma, colour and taste; the temperature may go up to 20 °C if maturing is carried out in a *secadero natural* (premises designed to harness natural ambient conditions for dry-curing purposes).

The use of special premises in which maturing conditions (temperature, relative humidity and ventilation) can be automatically adjusted to a desired level is permitted for the purposes of controlling these conditions and keeping them from fluctuating.

Visible, accessible space and monitoring equipment must be available within the premises to allow temperature and humidity levels to be checked and product progress to be monitored at any time during fermentation or maturing.

Dry-curing in air-conditioned rooms or natural environments:

For the post-maturation and dry-curing stage, once maturing is complete the chorizos are moved to the hanging or drying premises, where they must remain until the end of this final stage, which sees the continuation of the microbial and enzymatic processes of maturing, allowing the chorizo's colour and aroma to stabilise. The curing period for 'Chorizo Riojano' varies according to length and/or diameter. Any chorizo that has become wrinkled, contains pockets of air or displays any other defect must be discarded.

3.6. *Specific rules concerning slicing, grating, packaging, etc. of the product the registered name refers to*

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3.7. *Specific rules concerning labelling of the product the registered name refers to*

The product must have a numbered certification label issued by the Regulatory Board, displaying the words *Indicación Geográfica Protegida* [protected geographical indication] 'Chorizo Riojano' and the product logo. The certification label must be attached at the registered production plant in a way that prevents it from being re-used.

The processing plants authorised to make 'Chorizo Riojano' PGI must be listed in the pertinent registers and are ultimately responsible for compliance with all the rules established for the product.

The Regulatory Board is responsible for keeping this register up to date at all times.

4. Concise definition of the geographical area

The area where the product is made, matured, dry-cured and labelled is the Autonomous Community of Rioja.

5. Link with the geographical area

Specificity of the geographical area

Natural factors: Three different climate types converge in the defined geographical area. This mixture of climates makes Rioja the ideal place for naturally maturing and dry-curing chorizo, allowing it to undergo the correct process of gradual physical and chemical transformation, which improves the appearance of the sliced chorizo, its flavour and very characteristic aroma.

This climate factor is less crucial nowadays because the last stages in the production process take place in climate-controlled rooms where ventilation, humidity and temperature can be regulated. The prevailing weather conditions are, however, always taken into account in this process, so climate does continue to play a very important role.

Human factor: What really sets 'Chorizo Riojano' apart from other chorizos is the traditional age-old production method that has been successfully passed down to the meat processing plants that make 'Chorizo Riojano'.

Specificity of the product

The protected geographical indication 'Chorizo Riojano' may only be used for chorizos of the 'Extra' quality class made in the traditional manner at registered facilities at which there are effective controls covering every single stage of the production, maturing, dry-curing and labelling process and also the quality and handling of all raw materials. Only chorizos that pass all checks in place throughout the process may be marketed as 'Chorizo Riojano', bearing the PGI symbol as a guarantee of origin.

Causal link between the geographical area, quality and reputation

Historical tradition and the product's reputation: Historically, when the weather turned cold in the Rioja highlands it was time for the annual tradition of slaughtering pigs and making the meat into chorizo, enough chorizo for the entire year, capable of lasting until the wine harvests of the following autumn. The local people's expertise in making and maturing this product – one so difficult to make and preserve correctly – was therefore of vital importance. There are enclaves scattered across Rioja, particularly in the highlands, where these practices continue to be commonplace today.

It was in the nineteenth century that chorizo production was first industrialised in Rioja with the appearance of the first family businesses that sold their product in their home town and the surrounding area. The first reference to a 'sausage factory in Logroño' in the 'Municipal Historical Archive' is from 1890. In a document dating from that same year, an industrialist and lawyer named Julio Farias describes sending chorizos from La Rioja to Cuba 'in tins prepared thoroughly with lard and sealed in a water bath to allow them to withstand those temperatures without the slightest impairment of their contents', ensuring that they arrived in good condition, as he had already prepared advertising material (he refers to 'leaflets, circulars and other advertisements') and was confident in the quality of his chorizos: '[...] even in face of the fierce competition on price from the United States, the quality of our product is infinitely better, as can be seen from the fact that it is preferred even by the poorest despite costing more'.

Another example comes from Javier Herce Galarreta's book compiling various articles published in *La Gaceta del Norte* newspaper in 1979. In Chapter VII, which is about pork, he writes: Pork is tremendously important to Rioja, and not just fresh pork: ham, chorizo and blood sausage are the mainstays of the area's typical product range, similar in form to those from other regions but with different flavours and uses. 'Chorizo Riojano' is perhaps the name that most obviously springs mind: a smooth, aromatic chorizo with a hint of spice and bold colour that is quite distinct from those made elsewhere. The

importance of pork and pork products in Rioja is clear to see from the number of meat processing and cured sausage plants spread across the region, with some places – such as Baños de Río Tobía, Laguna de Cameros, and, more recently, Albelda de Iregua – having become veritable ‘hubs’ that are just as important, relatively speaking, as the wine and fresh produce preserving industries. With its three-pronged gourmet industry – cured sausages in the Sierra area, wine in Rioja Alta and preserved fresh produce in Rioja Baja – Rioja can be seen as three regions in one unique setting.

The economic depression of the 1930s and customers’ constant failure to settle their bills led many factories to close, leaving references in municipal industrial tax registers as the only proof that they ever existed. Following this economic shift, Baños de Río Tobía became the nerve centre of this industry. Although many reasons could be ventured to explain why the descendants of the early industrialists decided to establish their own plants there, it appears that the town’s favourable climatic conditions were influential. According to Miguel Ángel Villoslada: *Initially the factories were located where the climate was suitable – dry and cold but without major temperature shifts.* That is why there are so many of them in Baños [de Río Tobía]. Our town is located at 500 metres above sea level, right at the gateway to the Sierra de la Demanda mountain range and the entire Urbiión area. *It is protected from the excessively cold winds of the Sierra de Herrera mountains and there are no abrupt swings in temperature or humidity.*

The traditional annual pig slaughter and artisanal production and preservation of chorizo are practices that still live on today, but on a small scale, mainly leaving the production of chorizo and other meat products to meat processing plants – usually located in the area – which, without losing sight of the age-old traditional manufacturing method, have specially designed premises and installations, meaning that they are able to mature the product even when the atmospheric conditions are not right.

Baños de Río Tobía continues to boast the region’s largest concentration of meat processing plants. Since the climate now plays much less of a decisive role, this concentration is largely down to the ancestral meat-curing tradition: ‘nearly all the meat industrialists here are related to one another, because they have common roots’. However, the meat processing plant with the highest turnover in Rioja is located in Albelda de Iregua. It started out as a local butcher’s shop in 1960, then the first factory opened in 1983, selling only horseshoe-shaped chorizo, and soon became the country’s leading producer.

Big meat processing businesses from outside Rioja attempt to capitalise on the product’s prestige by labelling chorizos as ‘Chorizo Riojano’ when they are nothing like the product that this protected geographical indication is intended to denote.

Moreover, the tradition and prestige that have earned ‘Chorizo Riojano’ its formidable reputation are also reflected in some of our region’s best-known dishes, such as *patatas con chorizo* (potatoes and chorizo), *calderete* (a lamb stew), *choricillo asado al sarmiento* (chorizos grilled over vine cuttings) and *preñaditos* (chorizo-stuffed bread rolls), not forgetting the fact that chorizo is also an ingredient in virtually every pulse-based stew.

It is finally worth mentioning that ‘Chorizo Riojano’ features on pages 110 and 111 of the *Inventario Español de Productos Tradicionales* [Spanish Traditional Product Inventory].

Reference to publication of the product specification

Under *Pliegos de condiciones* [Product specifications] at:

<https://www.larioja.org/agricultura/es/calidad-agroalimentaria>
