

Publication of an application for registration of a name pursuant to Article 50(2)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs

(2023/C 264/11)

This publication confers the right to oppose the application pursuant to Article 51 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽¹⁾ within three months from the date of this publication.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'Requeijão da Madeira'

EU No: PGI-PT-02831 — 6.3.2022

PDO () PGI (X)

1. Name(s) [of PDO or PGI]

'Requeijão da Madeira'

2. Member State or Third Country

Portugal

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff

3.1. Type of product

Class 1.4. Other products of animal origin (eggs, honey, various dairy products except butter, etc.)

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

'Requeijão da Madeira' is the fresh dairy product resulting from the precipitation, by heat, of whole or skimmed cow's milk produced on the island of Madeira which has first been coagulated by natural souring through the action of the native lactic bacteria that develop in the raw milk. No type of rennet, ferment or acidifier is added. Only salt is added, and it is not subjected to any curing process, in accordance with the traditional Madeiran production method.

Physico-chemical characteristics:

It is a fresh product whose unpressed mass is shaped in cotton cloths that are compressed to form what are known locally as pães (loaves) or bolas (balls) of requeijão, which may vary in weight (but weigh less than 10 kg) and are packaged, whole or in portions, in sealed plastic trays or bags. It can also be moulded in cheese moulds or multi-mould trays, which allows the whey to drain off, before being packaged in individual containers of various capacities (between 100 g and 500 g), which are also sealed.

The moisture content can vary between 52 % (when compressed) and 66 % (when moulded), and it is mildly acidic (pH between 5,6 and 6,2).

It contains high levels of:

protein: usually over 15 %;

fat: up to 16 %;

ash: over 1,8 %;

sugars: between 2 % and 3 %; and

has a salt content of between 0,2 % and 0,3 %.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

These values may vary throughout the year due to natural variations in the composition of the cow's milk produced on the island, and the fat content can be lower if the raw milk used has been skimmed.

Organoleptic characteristics:

The colour ranges from intense to more or less dull, varying from chalk white to slightly yellowish.

It has a consistency that is creamy and smooth to quite lumpy and dense, with some cracks or holes. It is usually quite firm, so can be cut for packaging, but if it is moulded in cheese moulds or trays to be packaged individually, it is moister and less firm. It has low to medium cohesiveness, adhesiveness and hardness and normal chewiness and elasticity.

It has a milky, buttery smell, with sweet, fruity notes. The taste is also milky and pleasant, slightly buttery and/or sweet, with a mild sourness and normal saltiness. Both the smell and taste are of normal intensity.

3.3. *Feed (for products of animal origin only) and raw materials (for processed products only)*

The main raw material used to make 'Requeijão da Madeira' is cow's milk obtained on the island, which is now produced mainly by commercial holdings, where the Holstein-Friesian breed is the main breed used for milk production.

On Madeira, the frequent shortages of fibrous feed (straw, hay and silage), which is an essential part of the dairy cows' diet, and compound feed, which is needed at different stages of their growth, mean that local livestock farmers often have to resort to purchasing these products on the intracommunity market.

Where available, local agri-food by-products are used, such as potato or sweet potato shoots, sugarcane straw, banana leaves, and sugarcane, apple or barley bagasse, which livestock farmers buy or collect from farmers and traditional agro-industry for use as supplementary feed or bedding for the animals. Only on the few family farms that continue to keep some Madeiran crossbred cattle are the animals still fed on spontaneous vegetation, vine leaves and other crop residues from the farm.

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

The production of the cow's milk and the processing of the milk to make 'Requeijão da Madeira' must take place in the defined geographical area.

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

On the local retail market, the product is presented in individual packaging, usually sealed; it may also be sold in slices or portions of *pão de requeijão* (loaf) packaged in bags or trays covered with food-grade plastic film.

Whole *pães de requeijão* (loaves) are mainly sold to local patisseries and catering establishments to make traditional and modern Madeiran cakes and pastries.

All packaging of 'Requeijão da Madeira' – whatever the form – takes place on the island of Madeira to avoid the risk of contamination or deterioration of this fresh product, which is made from naturally soured, raw, whole or skimmed cow's milk, without the addition of any preservatives, apart from salt, and which does not undergo any curing process and therefore has a limited shelf life and must be kept chilled at low temperatures (0 °C to 5 °C).

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

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

The island of Madeira.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

The link between 'Requeijão da Madeira' and the geographical area is founded on specific characteristics that are a result of the traditional Madeiran production process.

To make 'Requeijão da Madeira', the cow's milk arriving at the cheese dairies, which may have been skimmed, is quickly chilled and kept at the holding temperature (below 6 °C) for an extended period (over 24 hours) to allow it to sour naturally through the action of native bacteria that convert the lactose into lactic acid. The milk may also be soured using a lactic ferment made on the spot by taking a small amount of the raw milk received and placing it at ambient temperature, under protected conditions, to speed up the natural souring process, and then mixing it with the rest of the milk to be processed.

In both cases, the aim is to reduce the normal pH of the milk (which is between 6,6 and 6,8) to around 6,0 to 6,2, which is considered to be optimal for initiating heat precipitation of the soured milk or the mixture of soured milk and fresh milk by gradually heating it for 1,5 to 2 hours until the temperature reaches 90–92 °C, leading to coagulation of the milk proteins.

The expertise built up over the generations means that the local cheesemakers can easily tell when the acidity is just right to start 'boiling' the milk to a high temperature. They rely, above all, on the empirical 'spoon test', where they heat small samples of the soured milk or the mixture of soured milk and fresh milk in a metal spoon over an open flame until it is acidic enough for the milk proteins to precipitate.

The acid/heat coagulation process needs a lower acidity to initiate casein precipitation, as gradual heating to above 85–90 °C promotes the total denaturation of the whey proteins in the milk, which coagulate together with the casein. Thus the proteins and the other constituents of the milk can be retrieved in the curds that float on the surface of the whey. These are either collected and poured into containers lined with cotton cloths to make embrulhos (bundles), which are pressed to form the pães or bolas, or they are used to fill cheese moulds or multi-mould trays, which are left to drip to allow the whey to drain off and the cheese mass to set before it is packaged in individual packages.

The traditional method of processing the cow's milk produced on the island to make 'Requeijão da Madeira' means that:

- it has specific organoleptic characteristics, as described in point 3.2, which give it a pleasant, fresh, milky, mildly sour (pH between 5,6 and 6,2) and slightly buttery and fruity smell and taste, which are much appreciated when it is eaten plain;
- its composition preserves most of the constituents of the milk that is used to make it, as a result of which it is high in protein, fat (if whole milk is used) and ash and still contains some sugars; and
- in addition to casein, it has high concentrations of whey proteins, which give it a high moisture content (between 52 % and 66 %), good cohesiveness and a low melting capacity, making it easy to cut to eat it plain or to package it in portions and making it ideal for use in making Madeira's most well-known convent sweets and modern cakes and pastries.

Livestock farming on the island of Madeira goes back to the time it was first settled, in around 1425, as the cattle arrived on the island with the first settlers. The earliest references to cheese production on the island date only from the end of the 18th century, when fresh cow's milk cheeses were sold door to door in Funchal, along with butter. The books of revenue and expenditure kept by the island's convents also contain records of the purchase of locally made requeijão to make queijadas (sweet cheese tartlets) and other typical sweetmeats made during festive periods.

Current producers recount that, from the early 20th century, in the upland areas of the parishes of Santo Antonio da Serra, Camacha and Gaula, their grandparents started producing a fresh dairy product using basic processes maintained over the centuries by livestock farmers and leiteiros (door-to-door raw-milk sellers) to make use of milk that had soured.

Initially, it was made from what was known as soro (whey), obtained from the cow's milk that livestock farmers took to the milk-skimming facilities scattered all over the island so that the cream could be skimmed off, collected and sent to make butter for export in the factory built in 1895 in Santo da Serra, the soro being what was returned to the livestock farmers to be used as food for people or animals.

This so-called soro, which was in fact skimmed milk, as it contained all the protein and other constituents of milk, would end up turning sour naturally, so in order to make use of it, some livestock farmers began to 'boil' it until curds formed, which would then be collected and pressed together in cotton cloths to form small bolas or pães for family consumption.

The restructuring of the dairy industry in around 1936 as a result of the decline of butter exports led to the closure of the island's milk-skimming facilities, so some producers started to use whole cow's milk to make their pães de queijão, which, in addition to being made for family consumption, were now in local demand. The traditional production process was passed down from one generation of local cheesemakers to the next, before being refined over the second half of the 20th century to ensure compliance with the rules and regulations governing artisan cheese production.

Because it was initially made from what was then known as soro, the local cheesemakers called their product queijão, the name that was used until the late 20th century, when they had to adopt the terms 'Queijão Madeirense' or 'Queijão da Madeira' to distinguish it from queijão from elsewhere, which really is made from whey derived from the production of various types of cheese.

Because of its quality, 'Queijão da Madeira' is highly sought after by consumers and by local bakers and restaurateurs, either to be eaten plain or to be used to make the various traditional and modern Madeiran cakes and pastries that have 'Queijão da Madeira' as their main ingredient, notably Madeira's very traditional queijadas. 'Queijão da Madeira' is sold in specialised establishments and large retail outlets on the island of Madeira.

In recent years, its renown among pastry chefs, journalists and students of Madeiran ethnography and cuisine has grown, as evidenced by the various articles in the national press and other publications that mention 'Queijão da Madeira', such as the article 'Moro numa ilha subtropical' [I live on a subtropical island] by Alexandra Prado Coelho, published in the 'Volta às Ilhas' [Around the Islands] edition of the Público newspaper's Fugas magazine in May 2016, the article 'Madeira para todos os bolsos' [Madeira to suit every budget] by Tiago Pais, published in the Observador newspaper in June 2017, the 'Sobremesas e doçaria típica da Madeira' [Desserts and sweetmeats typical of Madeira] page published by MadMarket in November 2017 and the publication *Gastronomia Tradicional – O Queijão de massa*, published in April 2017 as part of the Madeira Ethnographic Museum's periodicals collection.

That it is so sought after and renowned is due to the desire to learn more about this special Madeiran product, with its distinctive organoleptic characteristics and unique consistency which derive from the fact that 'Queijão da Madeira' is no ordinary queijão and no ordinary cheese.

Reference to publication of the specification

<https://tradicional.dgadr.gov.pt/pt/cat/queijos-e-productos-lacteos/1116-requeijao-da-madeira>
