

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 235/08)

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 from the date of this publication.

SUMMARY

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006

‘KRAŠKI PRŠUT’

EC No: SI-PGI-005-0417-29.10.2004

PDO () PGI (X)

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

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Composition: Producers/processors (X) other ()

3. Type of product:

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

4. Specification:

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

4.1. Name:

‘Kraški pršut’

4.2. Description:

Kraški pršut is an air-dried/matured meat product made from whole fresh hind legs of pork.

A distinguishing feature of ‘Kraški pršut’ is its standard and recognisable shape. Fresh hind legs are prepared without the feet, but with the rind and fat, if any. A fresh hind leg must weigh at least 9 kg. The muscle meat extends 5-7 cm from below the head of the thigh bone (*Caput ossis femoris*). On the inside of the hind leg, the muscle meat is uncovered; the rind and fat are trimmed slightly more towards the shank.

Favourable climatic conditions in the Kras (Karst) make it possible to dry whole hind legs. Dry-salting using only coarse sea salt is a characteristic feature of 'Kraški pršut'. Its characteristic organoleptic properties, which are reflected in a lower moisture content owing to a higher level of dehydration, develop over a sufficiently long drying/maturing period. It typically has a somewhat higher salt content (up to 7,4 %), and slices are perceived to have a firmer texture in the mouth. The degree of dehydration and a sufficiently long maturing period help to produce the characteristic colour of the ham when sliced, which is pinkish red with a darker hue around the edges. It has an intense aroma and taste. Its very piquant aroma is characteristic of the degree of maturity, and this also distinguishes it from other hams.

4.3. *Geographical area:*

The Kras region is situated in the western part of central Primorska. The salting, drying and maturing of 'Kraški pršut' takes place in the limited area of the Kras where the hams are traditionally produced.

The boundary of this area runs from Kostanjevica na Krasu to Opatje selo, from there to the border between Slovenia and Italy and along that border to the Lipica border crossing, from there along the road to Lokev, taking in that town, then along the road to Divača, from there in a straight line towards the village of Brestovica pri Povirju and on to the villages of Štorje, Kazlje, Dobravlje, Ponikve, Kobdilj and Štanjel, then in a straight line through Mali Dol to Škrbina, on to Lipa and Temnica and back to Kostanjevica na Krasu.

4.4. *Proof of origin:*

All producers of 'Kraški pršut' must produce it within the geographical area laid down for the production of 'Kraški pršut'. In order to ensure traceability and quality, all stages of production take place within that geographical area. A register is kept of producers and establishments that produce 'Kraški pršut'. The quantity of 'Kraški pršut' produced is recorded for each producer. All stages of production are monitored by the inspection body specified in point 4.7., which is accredited in accordance with European standard EN 45011.

Before being salted, the fresh hind legs are hot-branded in a conspicuous position on the rind. The mark comprises the series and the day, month and year. These indications are mandatory and form an integral part of the checks on the production process as a whole and traceability. For each producer, a record is kept of the number of hams in each batch. The batch number is accompanied by details of checks on key production processes.

When drying and maturing are complete, the hams are subjected to sensory and laboratory tests to determine their quality, and the 'Kraški pršut' mark is applied to them. Whole hams, halves and quarters have the 'Kraški pršut' logo branded onto the rind. This mark is accompanied by the producer number.

4.5. *Method of production:*

- No specific breed of pig is specified for the production of 'Kraški pršut'.
- Fresh hind legs are collected at least 24 hours, but no more than 120 hours, after slaughter, but damaged hind legs and those weighing less than 9 kg are rejected. Hind legs must be kept chilled at a temperature of -1°C to $+4^{\circ}\text{C}$. They must not have been frozen. The depth of the fat covering of the outside of the fresh, trimmed hind leg, measured from under the head of the thigh bone (*Caput ossis femoris*), must not be less than 10 mm.
- The start of the salting is marked by means of hot-branding: day, month, year, batch.
- Dry salting process: rubbing-in, draining-off of blood, use of coarse sea salt; the amount of salt is determined by the weight of the hind legs.
- Placing of salted hind legs on shelves.
- Salting and post-salting take place at a temperature of $+1^{\circ}\text{C}$ to $+4^{\circ}\text{C}$; the duration of the salting process depends on the weight of the hind legs.

- Removal of salt from the surface of the hind legs.
- Cold-drying in circulating air at a temperature of + 1 °C to + 5 °C.
- Cold-drying in gently circulating air at a temperature of + 1 °C do + 7 °C; the duration of the entire cold-drying stage, including salting, is at least 75 days, the degree of drying achieved is at least 16 %.
- The hind legs are washed in hot water and wiped dry and prepared for drying/maturing.
- Trimming of muscle meat around the head of the thigh bone (*Caput ossis femoris*) and, if necessary, in places where the pelvic bone has been removed.
- Drying/maturing at temperatures of + 12 °C to + 18 °C. If hind legs weigh 9 kg at the start, the total production period is at least 12 months; the production period is correspondingly longer if they weigh more.
- The muscle meat is greased in several stages during the drying/maturing process. The amount of greasing depends on the water content, the a_w value and the degree of drying attained. Pork fat with salt, pepper, flour and (if necessary) antioxidants added is used for greasing.
- Measurements are taken of the degree of drying attained, which must be at least 33 % in relation to the initial weight of the hind legs.
- The matured hams are kept in a dry and well-ventilated place. Hams and sliced ham, vacuum-packed or wrapped in a controlled atmosphere, are kept at a temperature not exceeding + 8 °C.
- Sensory testing to determine whether the aroma is correct is carried out by inserting the tip of a horse-bone needle into the muscle meat.
- Laboratory tests are conducted to determine the salt content (the maximum salt content is 7,4 %) and the a_w value (the a_w value must be below 0,93).

After hot-branding (for more details, see point 4.8: Labelling), 'Kraški pršut' may be marketed whole, on the bone or deboned, and packaged whole, or in halves or quarters or, appropriately packaged, in slices. The marking on the rind and packaging is indelible. In order to maintain quality and specific procedures, 'Kraški pršut' may be deboned, cut into pieces (halves or quarters) and wrapped in retail packaging only in establishments certified for the production of 'Kraški pršut'. In order to guarantee microbiological safety and to preserve the typical organoleptic properties of the ham, such as its aroma, colour and texture, only such establishments may slice the ham and package the slices in a vacuum or a modified atmosphere.

4.6. Link:

The geographical indication is based above all on the tradition of producing 'Kraški pršut' and its long-established reputation.

The Kras (Karst) is a plateau with a diverse landscape in south-western Slovenia. It forms a distinctive natural unit and is clearly defined in relation to other, neighbouring regions. The Kras was the first region in Europe, and indeed the world, to be described as possessing karst features. The soils are calcareous; the arable part of the land, the 'red earth', produces only modest yields. The Kras is where a mild Mediterranean climate meets cold continental air blowing down from the north-east towards the Gulf of Trieste, widely known as the 'Bora'. The diversity of the Kras plateau and the immediate vicinity of the sea means that there is always a wind or breeze and the relative humidity is comparatively low, and this, together with the soil composition and vegetation, has since ancient times provided local people with favourable microclimatic conditions for the drying of meat.

The success in terms of the current extent, reputation and development of ham production in the Kras is due to the traditional and individual techniques used by farmers. The drying of pieces of meat likely dates back to the time when the Kras was settled by people. The development of Trieste as a major urban centre and the development of routes such as that between Vienna and Trieste, which passed through the Kras, increased demand for ham amongst traders and innkeepers. The reputation of the ham grew at the same time. As demand for the ham increased and its reputation grew, so did interest in the production of 'Kraški pršut'.

Valvasor wrote of the people of the Kras in 1689:

'These good people help themselves as they can and live poorly; they are very happy if they have a piece of pork fat (which they can digest due to their arduous work), onion, and a piece of plain, coarse, brown, rolled bran bread. In some places they suffer a considerable lack of wood, and especially in summer, clear water.' (Rupel, 1969)

In 1960, in the book 'Slovensko Primorje' A. Melik wrote:

'Pig-farming is well-developed in the Kras. It is every farmer's wish to be able to slaughter pigs for their own needs. The rearing of pigs is connected with food production in market gardens and fields. The temperatures in winter are right, and meat is preserved "raw", dried in the form of "Kraški pršut".'

Thus, over time, technical skills have evolved with experience and have become a tradition. When producing dried meat products, the people of the Kras always employ the salt-curing method and use salt in moderation, so that their products have the right balance between saltiness and sweetness. Hind legs and shoulders are salted whole. In other areas of Slovenia hind legs are normally divided into smaller pieces and brine is used, with a combination of dry and wet salting.

Concern for quality demands exacting standards and permanent supervision throughout the production process. Considerable work by individuals has produced a wealth of experience, which has become a tradition. Mastery of the individual phases of production under natural climatic conditions has led, through the maturing process, to the development of the typical organoleptic characteristics of the ham, its scent, flavour, colour and texture. These characteristics have become the norm and contribute to the renown of 'Kraški pršut'. It is an example of harmony between man and nature. Know-how based on experience has developed over time, giving 'Kraški pršut' its recognisable shape and organoleptic characteristics.

An organised purchase of hams took place in 1953. The Štanjel famers' cooperative bought 3 000-4 000 hams annually at that time. Hams would be bought from farmers in the Štanjel and Vrhov areas and in the wider Kras area. The hams weighed over 8 kg, and the drying and maturing period was 18 months. Some of the hams were exported to the Italian market. Inns and hotels in Slovenia also purchased hams, which contributed to what the hotel and catering sector had to offer. In order to satisfy demand on the market, cooperatives and enterprises engaged in the production of hams. From 1963 through to 1977, the salting, smoking and drying techniques used were exactly the same as those used on farms. 1963 was also when the ham started to be labelled as 'Kraški pršut'.

A new era in the production of 'Kraški pršut' and other dried meat specialities dawned in 1977, when producers began operating ham production units equipped with special technology (known as 'pršutarne'). The typical appearance and organoleptic properties of the ham reflect the gastronomic culture of the Kras.

4.7. *Inspection body:*

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4.8. *Labelling:*

A recognisable feature of 'Kraški pršut' is the logo in the form of a ham, with the inscription 'Kraški pršut'. This logo is accompanied by the producer's number. The logo is applied to the rind of whole hams on the bone, deboned hams and half and quarter hams by hot branding. When sold sliced, the ham retains part of the rind into which the mark has been hot-branded.

The hot-branding guarantees the quality of the product and that it has been produced in the specified geographical area in accordance with the specification and subject to the appropriate supervision. All producers of 'Kraški pršut' that have obtained the certificate of compliance of production with the specifications have the right to label using the logo.

Only hams on the bone, deboned hams, halves and quarters and ham slices which bear the hot-branded mark have on their labels the 'Kraški pršut' logo with the words 'protected geographical indication'. Ham that is sliced and packaged in a vacuum or a modified atmosphere has the 'Kraški pršut' logo printed on its label.

The logo is printed to the right of the 'Kraški pršut' inscription. Its position is mandatory for all producers. The label bears the inscription 'protected geographical indication' and the certificate number mentioned. The product is also marked with the quality symbol of the Republic of Slovenia and/or the corresponding Community symbol.
