TECHNICAL FILE

ON THE GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

OUZO OF THRACE (amended)

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Established geographical indication: Ούζο Θράκης / Ouzo of Thrace

Category of alcoholic beverage:

Distilled anis, as defined in Category 29 of Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008.

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Description of Ouzo of Thrace

Ouzo of Thrace is a compound geographical indication which includes the geographical indication Ouzo. Therefore, it essentially complies with the specifications on Ouzo, with regard to the production method and its quality characteristics, and its reputation is linked to the geographical area designated with the indication ‘Thrace’.

Physical, chemical and/or organoleptic characteristics

Ouzo of Thrace is a colourless, transparent liquid. As a rule, a white emulsion (usually cloudy) appears when the product is mixed with water and/or ice. This is due to the aromatic compounds contained in the drink, the solubility of which reduces as the temperature and ethyl alcohol concentration decrease.

Ouzo owes its aroma and taste to the flavouring of the alcohol by means of distillation and/or maceration using fennel seed, aniseed, mastic from the mastic tree native to the island of Chios, and other aromatic seeds.

Its characteristics depend on the type, quantity and proportion of flavourings used, as well as on the production process.

Special characteristics (compared with alcoholic beverages in the same category)

1. In addition to aniseed (Pimpinella anisum), the main flavouring material used in Ouzo of Thrace is fennel seed (Foeniculum vulgare). Other flavouring materials are also used, such as star aniseed (Illicum verum), coriander (Coriandum sativum), juniper (Juniperus) and Chios mastic (Pistacia lentiscus chia).
2. Flavouring with distillation of ethyl alcohol is performed exclusively in traditional discontinuous copper stills with a capacity of 1 000 litres or less, and the distillate obtained has an alcoholic strength of not less than 55 % vol. and not more than 80 % vol.
3. The minimum alcoholic strength by volume is 37.5 %.
4. To produce Ouzo of Thrace, it is permitted to add flavourings produced exclusively by extraction and distillation of the aromatic seeds, plants and nuts used to flavour ethyl alcohol by maceration or distillation.
5. Sugars are added, if needed, in small quantities, so that the Ouzo of Thrace placed on the market may have a dry extract of no more than 50 grams per litre.

Relevant geographical area

Ouzo of Thrace is produced in Greece and, in particular, within the geographical limits of Thrace, which comprises the Regional Units of Xanthi, Rodopi and Evros, in the Administrative Region of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace.

Map of Thrace

(the area of Thrace is indicated with blue colour on the map of Greece)



Specific steps in production that must take place in the geographical area concerned include:

- flavouring the ethyl alcohol by maceration and/or distillation, in the presence of the aromatic raw materials;

- blending the flavouring alcohols;

- adding aromatic constituents and sweeteners;

- diluting with water to achieve the final alcoholic strength;

- bottling.

Method for obtaining Ouzo of Thrace

Ouzo of Thrace is produced by blending alcohols flavoured by means of distillation or maceration using fennel seed, aniseed, mastic from a mastic tree native to the island of Chios and other aromatic seeds.

All seeds are stored in controlled humidity and temperature conditions. Prior to their use, approximately 18 hours before distillation, fennel seeds are sieved and a sample is taken in order to determine their content in trans-Anethole. Based on the identified concentration in trans-Anethole, the corresponding quantity of fennel seeds is weighed and placed in appropriate cloth pouches, which are then kept underwater for at least 16 hours. This will allow fennel seeds to release higher quantities of essential oils and aromas during the subsequent process of distillation.

During the process of distillation, the cloth fennel pouches and other flavouring materials are placed in the still. Then, the still is filled with ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin (96 % vol) and water, and is sealed, in order to start the distillation process.

First, the still is heated until the ethyl alcohol/water mix reaches a temperature of 80° C. At that temperature, steam supply is reduced in order to receive the first fraction of distillation (known as ‘head’), which is collected in a separate vessel.

Then, steam supply is further reduced in order to produce the second, main fraction of distillation (known as ‘heart’), which is used for the production of Ouzo and is collected in a separate vessel. During the distillation of the ‘heart’, the temperature and alcoholic strength of the distillate are continuously monitored, using a thermometer and an alcoholmeter, respectively. When alcoholic strength reaches 72 % vol, the collection of the second fraction is stopped.

The distillation process is continued in order to produce the third and last fraction (known as ‘tails’), which is also placed in a separate vessel. Distillation is stopped when, according to the indication of the alcoholmeter, all ethyl alcohol quantities have been received.

The distillate mentioned above, i.e. the main fraction (known as ‘heart’), is diluted to 72 % vol and transferred to stainless tanks for storage, where it stays for 2-3 days. As a rule, various types of distillates are received separately (depending on the proportion of aromatic plants used), which are then mixed to obtain Ouzo of Thrace.

First, the ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin is placed in a stirrer tank, flavoured with essential oils which are obtained exclusively from flavouring materials of the same type as the ones used to produce the distillates. Then, the various distillate types are added. Two to five distillate types are used to produce finished products of Ouzo of Thrace. The ethyl alcohol flavoured by distillation represents at least 20 % of the alcoholic strength of the finished product.

Water is added to the mix of alcohols, which is taken from the reverse osmosis system, whose electrical conductivity is monitored and recorded on a daily basis, along with melted sugar.

The mixture is stirred and transferred, through a system of stainless steel tubing, to stainless steel tanks, where it remains for at least two weeks before bottling, for homogenisation, stabilisation and maturing of its ingredients. Once the tank is filled, a sample is taken, in order to be tested for the required parameters (alcoholic strength, trans-Anethole concentration, volatile components with high-pressure gas and liquid chromatography, organoleptic and macroscopic features).

The finished product is transferred through stainless tubing from the tank to a filter located at the bottling line, where it is filtered under controlled pressure conditions. Then, it is transferred to the filling machine and inserted in the bottles. Downstream the production line, labels are affixed to the bottles, so that the product may acquire the indication Ouzo of Thrace (along with all indications required by applicable legislation) and, finally, the batch number is placed on the bottle. A finished product sample is taken from the bottling line and is then tested for all factors mentioned above, which are also tested for the stored final product in the tank.

The aforementioned bottled products are placed in cardboard boxes (packaging), which also indicate the batch number. The need to indicate the batch number on cardboard boxes (packaging) arises from the quality and security requirements of the traceability system. The various checks performed during bottling allow for withdrawing any defective bottles (defective cap/sealing, incorrectly-affixed labels, etc.), which are filled in a specific period of time, given that the cardboard boxes indicate both the batch number and the time of bottling. Cardboard boxes are then palletised and the pallets are taken to the finished products’ warehouse where they are kept in controlled humidity and temperature conditions, as appropriate for the conservation of Ouzo of Thrace, until they are placed on the market.

Link with the geographical environment or origin

At present, the production of Ouzo of Thrace corresponds to 9 % of the overall Ouzo production in Greece. It is a predominantly export product, given that 95 % of produced volumes are exported abroad.

The following factors demonstrate the link between Ouzo of Thrace and the geographical area.

Link of the reputation of Ouzo of Thrace with the geographical area

Ever since the Byzantine era, distillates flavoured with fennel have been offered as aperitifs in almost all Mediterranean regions. The Greek population of Constantinople, Alexandria and Smyrna were at the centre of the distillate technique. The rich land of Asia Minor provided excellent raw materials (grapes and figs), and the cultivation of anise supplied the necessary ingredient for the preparation of ‘raki’.

Under Turkish rule, the beverage prepared by the ‘rakitzides’ became a favourite of the affluent class and they were thus granted special benefits.

Hence, ouzo was born through time and was sold for many years in many regions of Greece, as well as in Thrace, under the old name ‘raki’.

Following the population exchange between Greece and Turkey (1922-1924), refugees, coming mainly from Eastern Thrace, settled in the area of Thrace. They brought along all their familiar crafts, one being the art of preparing ouzo. The special characteristics of the ‘cauldroned’ ouzo as they call it, are its light flavour and smoothness. The basic ingredients are aromatic plants which are cultivated or grow naturally in the area, such as anise and fennel.

Ouzo production in Thrace started to expand. The undertakings producing ouzo (and other spirit drinks, such as liqueur or brandy) also had retail stores, known as ‘ouzo stores’ (‘*ουζοπωλεία*’).

Their owners were called ‘ouzo liquor sellers’ (*ουζοποτοπώλαι*) or ‘ouzo sellers’ (*ουζοπώλαι*) and created associations, in order to protect their professional interests. The profession of ‘ouzo seller’ was also recognised by the Greek State, as evidenced by the electoral lists of 1948-1949, where this profession was listed next to the name of a person with the same surname as a distiller currently operating in the area of Thrace (obviously his descendant). Over the years, a distinction was made between ouzo producers, distillers and points of sale, i.e. liquor stores. The younger generations of distillers are based on the experience of the first Ouzo distillers, combined with studies in the field and systematic knowledge on the production process and quality management.

In addition, Ouzo consumption is increasing and Ouzo has become an inextricable element of various local customs.

Before an engagement, the father of the bride would invite the groom to his home so they could get acquainted over a bottle of Ouzo. The invitation to the wedding was extended by the second best man. He would go from house to house with a bottle of Ouzo, a glass with a sprig of basil and would treat the residents while he extended the invitation. They also drank Ouzo on the wedding day, during the groom shaving ritual.

Another Thracian custom is the ‘Gynecocratia’ (gynaecocracy) or the ‘day of the Babo’. It is the day in honour of the grandmother, the *mami* (midwife) as the old-timers called her, who, with her experience and wisdom, helped women give birth. On that day, *mezedes* and ouzo dominated the table set in honour of the midwife. The festive occasion was accompanied by the sound of the traditional Thracian instrument, the *gaida* (bagpipes).

The role of Ouzo in the social life of Thrace is probably most accurately reflected by a photograph, dating back to the annexation of Thrace by Greece on 14 March 1920, showing soldiers and civilians gathered around a table in front of the store ‘GROCERY AND OUZO STORE DIM. GEMENITZIS´, drinking Ouzo to celebrate the annexation (photograph from the General State Archives of Greece in Komotini, attached hereto as Annex II).

In 1977, 14 small distillers from the Municipality of Rhodope merged, in order to establish the Distillery-Winery of Thrace. Since then, this distillery is the main producer of Ouzo of Thrace, keeping alive this long tradition, both in Thrace and outside Greece.

Natural factors in the geographical area

1. Water. Water in each area has its own specific taste, since there are differences even between water from neighbouring areas. This is due to the content of dissolved salts and gas. Many producers maintain that the water they use for distillation and dilution to reach the desired alcoholic strength plays a key role in the identity of the final product. The water used to produce Ouzo of Thrace is considered to be particularly rich in minerals, which it acquires as it crosses the Rhodope mountain range.
2. Flavourings The main flavouring used in Ouzo of Thrace is fennel, which is cultivated in the broader area of Thrace. Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) is a herbaceous aromatic plant, whose seeds are rich in essential oils, with a flavour close to that of anise. In addition to anethole, which is the dominant aromatic compound in terms of quantity, a large number of other aromatic compounds are also used, with the highest concentrations being for: p-anisaldehyde, fenchone, linalool, chavicol methyl ether. In Thrace, fennel was known from antiquity, and the ancient city of Marathonia is also mentioned as ‘*πάλι* ς Θράκης, ουκ άποθεν Αβδήρων, το εθνικόν Μαραθωνιάτης’ (Stephani Byzantii ‘*Ἐθνικα*’, 5th Century CE, as cited in edition Stephanii : Byzantii, *Εθνικών*, Antonius Westermann, sumptibus e tipis B.G. Teubneri, Leipzig, 1839, digitised version of the original, which is part of the collection of the National Central Library of Rome, p. 191).

The characteristic flavour of Ouzo of Thrace is due to juniper seeds, collected from the juniper trees growing in the Rhodope mountain range. This area has mainly two species of juniper: - the common juniper (*Juniperus communis*), with two subspecies, i.e. *hemispherica* and *Alpine*;

- prickly juniper (*Juniperus oxycedrus*), with the subspecies *oxycedrus*, which is most probably the prickly juniper mentioned by Theophrastus and the small juniper mentioned by Dioscorides.

The main ingredients of the essential oil deriving from juniper seeds, in which more than 250 compounds have been identified, are: myrcene, alpha-pinene, germacrene D and limonene.

European Union provisions and national/regional provisions

European Union provisions

Ouzo of Thrace is registered as a geographical indication for Greece under the category ‘distilled anis’, the specifications of which are laid down in point 29 of Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008.

Its production and presentation is governed by the EU legislation specific to spirit drinks, namely Regulation (EC) No 110/2008, its Implementing Regulation (EU) 716/2013, as well as by Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 ‘on the provision of food information to consumers...’, without prejudice to the specific provisions and exemptions on spirit drinks provided for in this Regulation.

National provisions

The production and presentation of Ouzo of Thrace is governed by the applicable national legislation regarding the production and placing on the market of spirit drinks and Ouzo, in general.

In addition, the special terms for using the geographical indication Ouzo of Thrace are laid down in Decision No 3025368/3991/0029/14.12.2010 of the Deputy Minister for Economy, establishing the terms of use of the geographical indication Ouzo of Thrace (Government Gazette, Series II, No 2024/B/27.12.2010).

(The text of this decision is attached hereto as Annex I).

Applicant

Member State: Greece

Details of the competent authority

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

GENERAL SECRETARIAT

FOR PUBLIC REVENUE

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

OF THE GENERAL CHEMICAL STATE LABORATORY

DIRECTORATE OF ALCOHOL AND FOODSTUFFS

DEPARTMENT A

Postal Address: 16 Anast. Tsochas St

 : Athens 115 21, Greece

Tel. : 0030-210-6479273,-221

Fax : 0030-210-6468272

e-mail : alcohol\_food@gcsl.gr

English Text:

Hellenic Republic

Ministry of Finance

General Secretariat

for public revenue

General Directorate

of General Chemical State

Laboratory Directorate

of Alcohol & Foodstuffs SECTION A'

Address : 16 Anast. Tsochas St

Athens 115 21, Greece

Tel : 0030-210-6479273, -221

Fax : 0030-210-6468272

e-mail : alcohol\_food@gcsl.gr

ANNEX I

Ref. 3025368/3991/0029

Terms of use of the geographical indication ‘Ouzo of Thrace’

DECISION

THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FINANCE

Having regard to:

* 1. The provisions of Chapter III ‘Geographical indications’ of Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of alcoholic beverages, and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 1576/89.
	2. Point 29 of Annex III to the same above Regulation, in which the geographical indication ‘Ouzo of Thrace’ is registered in favour of Greece under the category ‘distilled anis’.
	3. The provisions [Article 5(4)(f)] of Law 2969/2001.
	4. The provisions [Article 7(5)(1) and (2)(a)] on geographical and traditional names and indications, laid down in Decision No 3010878/1396/2003 of the Minister for Economy and Finance regarding the production and marketing of spirit drinks (Government Gazette, Series II, No 832, 25.06.2003), as amended by Decision No 3018093/2377/0029/09.08.2007 of the Minister for Economy and Finance (Government Gazette, Series II, No 1634/B/17.08.2007).
	5. The provisions on Ouzo (Chapter A of Article 6) of the same Decision mentioned above.
	6. Joint Decision No Δ6Α1142500 ΕΞ 2010/26.10.2010 of the Prime Minister and the Minister for Finance ‘Assignment of competences to the Deputy Minister for Finance, Dimitrios Kouselas’ (Government Gazette, Series II, No 1725, 03.11.2010).
	7. A request of the distillers and the information in the file submitted to the Service.
	8. The recommendation of 24 November 2010 of the Directorate for Alcohol, Alcoholic Beverages, Wine, Beer of the General Chemical State Laboratory to the Deputy Minister for Finance, regarding the adoption of the relevant decision.
	9. The fact that the provisions of this decision do not entail any burden to the state budget.

Has decided as follows:

Article 1

* + 1. The provisions hereof establish the production conditions and the control procedures in order to place ouzo on the market with the geographical indication ‘Ouzo of Thrace’, which has already been registered in favour of Greece within the meaning of the relevant provisions of Regulation (EC) No 110/2008. Alternatively, the indication ‘Ouzo Thrakiotiko’ (Thracian ouzo) may be used.
		2. The indication ‘of Thrace’ or ‘Thrakiotiko’ shall be annotated on the packaging, next to the sales denomination ‘Ouzo’, and the font size used must not be bigger than the one used for such denomination.

Article 2

* + - 1. In order for the use of the above geographical indication to be authorised, the entire production process, from the stage of flavouring by distillation of ethyl alcohol to the final preparation of the drink and bottling, shall be carried out entirely in undertakings that have their production facilities within the geographical area of Thrace, which includes the Regional Units of Xanthi, Rhodope and Evros of the Administrative Region of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace.
			2. The use of the aforementioned geographical indication on Ouzo, in any way, without compliance with the terms hereof, is not allowed.
			3. Use of the word ‘Thrace’, words of the same root and compound words that encompass it in the trade name of alcoholic drinks is not allowed.

Article 3

* + - * 1. Distillers who are interested in producing and marketing ouzo with the geographical indication ‘of Thrace’ or ‘Thrakiotiko’ must submit to the local Chemical Service (of Alexandroupoli or Xanthi) all the evidence demonstrating their right to use the geographical indication in question. The local competent Chemical Service, following the examination of the evidence, shall grant the approval to use the geographical indication in question to the interested parties.
				2. The Chemical Services of Alexandroupoli and Xanthi are responsible for inspecting regularly the distillers who make use of this geographical indication, and for revoking the above approval, if the distillers breach Articles 1 and 2 of this Decision.
				3. Non-compliance with the terms laid down in this Decision constitutes an infringement of Law 2969/2001, which is punishable in accordance with Article 11(2)(xii) and Article 12(viii) of the said Law.

Article 4

This Decision enters into force on the day of its publication in the Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FINANCE

DIMITRIOS KOUSELAS