

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 234/08)

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.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006

'PIAVE'

EC No: IT-PDO-0005-0686-04.03.2008

IGP () PDO (X)

1. Name:

'Piave'

2. Member State or third country:

Italy

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff:

3.1. Type of product (Annex II):

Class 1.3. Cheeses

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

'Piave' is a hard, aged, cylindrical cooked cheese made from cows' milk.

The cheese is marketed as the following types:

Fresco (fresh): aged between 20 and 60 days, diameter 320 mm \pm 20 mm, height of the heel 80 mm \pm 20 mm, weight 6,8 kg \pm 1 kg.

Mezzano (medium): aged between 60 and 180 days, diameter 310 mm \pm 20 mm, height of the heel 80 mm \pm 20 mm, weight 6,6 kg \pm 1 kg.

Vecchio (mature): aged more than 6 months, diameter 290 mm \pm 20 mm; height of the heel 80 mm \pm 20 mm, weight 6,0 kg \pm 1 kg.

Vecchio selezione oro (extra-mature): aged more than 12 months, diameter 280 mm \pm 20 mm, height of the heel 75 mm \pm 20 mm, weight 5,8 kg \pm 1 kg.

Vecchio riserva (ultra-mature): aged more than 18 months, diameter 275 mm \pm 20 mm, height of the heel 70 mm \pm 20 mm, weight 5,5 kg \pm 1 kg.

It shall have the following characteristics:

Fat content: Fresco 33 % \pm 4 %, Mezzano 34 % \pm 4 %, Vecchio > 35 %.

Protein content: Fresco 24 % \pm 4 %, Mezzano 25 % \pm 4 %, Vecchio > 26 %.

- Taste: initially it has a sweet, lactic taste, especially in the Fresco variety but also discernable in the Mezzano variety; as the cheese ages, the taste becomes steadily more intense and full-bodied until becoming slightly pungent with cheeses which are aged longer.
- Rind: obvious, soft and clear in the Fresco variety but thicker and harder with greater aging, becoming hard and increasingly dark and tending towards ochre in the Vecchio, Vecchio Selezione Oro and Vecchio Riserva varieties.
- Paste: marked by a lack of holes; it is white and uniform in the Fresco variety but becomes straw-coloured with a drier and more brittle and crumbly consistency in older varieties, with typical flaking in the Vecchio, Vecchio Selezione Oro and Vecchio Riserva varieties.

3.3. Raw materials (for processed products only):

The cows' milk used for the production of Piave comes exclusively from the province of Belluno, with at least 80 % produced by species which are typical of the production area: Bruna italiana (Italian Brown), Pezzata Rossa italiana (Italian Red Pied) and Frisona italiana (Italian Friesian).

The other raw materials which are used also comply with the criteria of respecting local tradition. Use is made of a specific starter culture and whey starter which are produced locally from milk from the province of Belluno and from processing serum containing cultures belonging to indigenous strains.

The acidity of the starter culture is $10^{\circ}\text{SH}/50 \pm 3$.

The acidity of the whey starter is $27^{\circ}\text{SH}/50 \pm 3$.

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

The feeding of the milking cows must comply with the following requirements:

at least 70 % of the fodder and 50 % of the dry matter must be produced in the production area indicated in paragraph 4, located wholly in mountain areas.

The feed may not include the following products:

- industrial medical feedingstuffs,
- vegetables, fruit and rape seed,
- urea, urea phosphate, biuret.

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

The whole process of production (milk production, titration, heat treatment, introduction of cultures, curdling, pouring/moulding, pressing, stamping, prematuring and salting) must take place within the area indicated in paragraph 4.

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

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3.7. Specific rules on labelling:

The name of the product (Piave) is stamped vertically on the whole rind with alternate lines reversed and inverted (height $70 \text{ mm} \pm 5 \text{ mm}$).

Each wheel of cheese must indicate the production batch allowing the day, month and year of production to be identified. The batch code must be stamped on the rind or one side of the wheel.

A label is attached to the other side of the wheel, with the following wording:

- 'Piave' with protected designation of origin,
- Fresco or Mezzano or Vecchio (Vecchio selezione oro — Vecchio riserva),
- mark or trade name of manufacturer.

4. Concise definition of the geographical area:

The area of production of Piave cheese comprises the territory of the province of Belluno.

5. Link with the geographical area:

5.1. Specificity of the geographical area:

The province of Belluno is situated wholly in a mountain area and its geographic borders are marked by mountain chains which divide the territory of Belluno from the region of Friuli Venezia-Giulia to the east, the Venetian plain of the provinces of Treviso and Vicenza to the south, Trentino Alto Adige to the west and Austria to the north. The river Piave runs through the territory from the north to the south and southeast from its source on Monte Peralba in Val Visdende in the area of Comelico in the most northerly part of the province of Belluno.

The existence and distribution of mountain chains, specifically the Dolomites in the northwest and the pre-Alps in the southeast, together with the river Piave which runs through the whole area, create a particular environment which differs from that of adjacent areas with very high average rainfall and average annual minimum temperatures which tend to be lower than in neighbouring areas. These particular environmental features of temperature and rainfall permit typical mountain species of vegetation to develop.

The province of Belluno is located in the Dolomite area of the Italian Alps and contains two important parks: the Parco Nazionale delle Dolomiti Bellunesi and the Parco Naturale Regionale delle Dolomiti d'Ampezzo.

The territory of the province of Belluno is entirely mountainous. Because of the lack of plain areas and hilly regions and the height and slope of the terrain, the whole province is classified as a less-favoured area for farming, but the same features also contribute to its suitability for milk and cheese production. The province of Belluno is marked by considerable grazing area totalling about 13 000 hectares, and the resulting figure of 4,38 hectares per animal is well above the average for neighbouring areas (0,67 hectares per animal).

5.2. Specificity of the product:

Piave cheese has the following characteristics:

- a typical taste profile during the various stages of aging, caused by processes of proteolysis and lipolysis which are the combined result of two types of culture and indigenous microorganisms,
- firmness as a result of the absence of fermenting gases,
- a lactic flavour, stronger in the younger products,
- a flavour which gradually becomes intense and full-bodied, and slightly pungent in older varieties, without ever becoming excessive, thus typifying the unique, balanced and easily recognised flavour of Piave cheese.

These quality characteristics are linked to two main factors:

- (a) the milk used for production, which is creamier and richer in protein than milk in other areas (even in the Veneto area).

The fact is that the milk used to produce Piave cheese comes exclusively from the province of Belluno and has an average fat content (3,93 %) and protein content (3,35 %) which are above those of milk produced in other provinces of the Veneto region (3,69 % for fat and 3,27 % for protein) and also above the national average (3,70 % for fat and 3,28 % for protein);

(b) the typical lactic microflora which are used, and which are indigenous.

The starter and whey cultures used to produce Piave are produced locally from milk and processing serum containing cultures belonging to indigenous strains. Since they are reproduced directly in the area, the microbial flora produced by these natural cultures represent a kind of microbiological imprint of the geographical area of production. The complex interactions which take place between the various organisms which they contain may be considered one of the decisive factors in achieving the particular organoleptic characteristics of Piave cheese.

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 organoleptic and nutritional characteristics of Piave cheese are derived from the particular geographical, environmental and production features of the mountain area where it is produced.

The notable properties of the milk used to produce Piave, with its higher fat and protein content, are a result of farming in mountain areas.

A feature of mountain areas in general but especially of the province of Belluno is their low production indices for milk. Indeed, the production of milk per hectare of permanent pastureland/grazing in the province of Belluno (less than 10 litres compared with an average of 272 litres per hectare of grazing in other provinces) and the productivity per animal (44 hectolitres per year compared with a regional average of 57 hectolitres) are well below the average figures in other areas. The grazing load of animals in the province of Belluno is also much lower than in neighbouring areas and provinces. As indicated earlier, the area of permanent pastureland/grazing available to cattle in the area where Piave cheese is produced (4,38 hectares per animal) is well above the figure for neighbouring areas and the regional average (0,67 hectares per animal).

An additional factor is that the environmental conditions, such as temperature and average rainfall which differ significantly from adjacent areas, permit the development of typical mountain species of vegetation which provide particular flavour to milk in the province of Belluno and thus to Piave cheese.

All these factors low — milk production indices in the identified area, the extent of available grazing, the ample supply of fodder and typical mountain species of vegetation for cattle feed — result in a precise ecological niche and produce the particular features which typify the quality of the milk produced in the province of Belluno.

These particular qualities, together with the use of two locally produced cultures (starter culture and whey starter), are the decisive factors which give Piave cheese its particular organoleptic characteristics.

The production of Piave cheese has been handed down from generation to generation in the province of Belluno. Its origin dates from the end of the 19th century when the first rotating dairies were set up in mountain areas in Italy.

The first products classified as 'Piave' — a river of renown for a product of renown — date from 1960, when a third of the 10 tonnes of milk per day supplied to the Latteria Sociale Cooperativa della Vallata Feltrina was set aside for the production of Piave and Fior di Latte cheeses.

Piave cheese takes its name from the river of the same name which crosses the whole province of Belluno from the north to the south and southeast.

Nowadays the product is well known and appreciated by consumers to the extent that since the 1980s it has received important awards for its particular and typical characteristics both nationally, where it obtained the Spino d'Oro award in 1986, 1992 and 1994 at the 23rd, 26th and 27th Mostra delle Produzioni Casarie cheese fairs in Thiene, and at international events, such as the Mountain Cheese Olympics in Verona in 2005 when it won the Buonitalia flavour award for the best export cheese, at the World Cheese Awards in Dublin where it won first prize for mature cheeses and at the World Food Exhibition in Moscow in 2007.

Reference to publication of the specification:

The Government launched the national objection procedure with the publication of the proposal for recognising 'Piave' in Official Gazette of the Italian Republic No 6 of 8 January 2008.

The full text of the product specification is available:

on the following website: http://www.politicheagricole.it/DocumentiPubblicazioni/Search_Documenti_Elenco.htm?txtTipoDocumento=Disciplinare%20in%20esame%20UE&txtDocArgomento=Prodotti%20di%20Qualit%20E0>Prodotti%20Dop,%20Igp%20e%20Stg

or

by going directly to the home page of the Ministry (<http://www.politicheagricole.it>) and clicking on 'Prodotti di Qualità' (on the left of the screen) and finally on 'Disciplinari di Produzione all'esame dell'UE [regolamento (CE) n. 510/2006]'.
