SPECIFICATION FOR THE GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

**‘Génépi des Alpes’**

**Part I - Technical file**

**1 - Name and category of spirit drink bearing the geographical indication**

Name: ‘Génépi des Alpes’

Category: ‘Génépi des Alpes’ falls under category 32 ‘Liqueur’ of Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2008.

‘Génépi des Alpes’ has been registered in Annex III to that Regulation.

**2 - Description of the spirit drink, including the product’s physical, chemical and/or organoleptic characteristics**

‘Génépi des Alpes’ is a liqueur which is colourless or tinged with a pale yellow to light green colour, varying from translucent to transparent.

The liqueur is characterised by its sweet and bitter flavour derived from the wormwood plant. It is distinguished by its delicate and fresh flavours sourced from plants of the genus *Artemisia* used to produce the liqueur. Its flavours can also include plant and floral aromas derived from or strengthened by other plants, where used. Nevertheless, there is always a prevailing flavour of wormwood.

‘Génépi des Alpes’ has an alcoholic strength by volume greater than or equal to 30 %.

**3 - Definition of the geographical area concerned**

Wormwood is harvested and cultivated and the liqueur produced and packaged in the following regions:

- France: departments of Alpes de Haute-Provence, Hautes-Alpes, Alpes Maritimes, Isère, Savoie and Haute-Savoie.

- Italy: regions of Piedmont and Valle d’Aosta.

Wormwood is harvested and cultivated in the regions comprising the geographical area, at an altitude of more than 1 500 metres within that area.

**4 - Description of the production method of the spirit drink, and of the authentic and unvarying local methods**

4.1 - Plants used

The plants used to make ‘Génépi des Alpes’ belong to the genus *Artemisia*:*artemisia mutellina* or *umbelliformis* (or white genepì), *artemisia spicata* (or weber, or black genepì), *artemisia glacialis* and *artemisia nivalis*.

Supplementing the wormwood, other flora can be used to give the liqueur its flavour and colour. Species include: angelica, mugworts (*artemisia vulgaris*), basil, sweet flag, cinnamon, clove, juniper, hyssop, lavender, melilot, mint, lemon balm, hypericum, oregano, white nettle, Scots pine, rosemary, savory, sage, Breckland thyme, elderberry, thyme, lemon verbena and kidney vetch.

The maximum proportion of supplementary plants which may be used when producing the liqueur varies depending on the production process: 15 % if carrying out maceration or suspension, 50 % if carrying out distillation. If supplementary plants are used, the typical organoleptic characteristics of ‘Génépi des Alpes’ must be preserved.

4.2 - Production methods

a) Flavour extraction

Flavours are extracted using one of the following three methods, carried out separately or in combination, in order to obtain a flavouring solution.

* Maceration of the plants in an alcohol solution for a minimum of 20 days in the case of dried plants and 15 days for fresh plants. Wormwood should account for at least 85 % of the weight of the plants used.
* Suspension, prepared from fresh or dried plants, placed in special racks suspended above a hydroalcoholic solution, within airtight containers in which the top is steeped in alcohol for a minimum of 90 days in order to collect the most volatile components from the plants. Wormwood should account for at least 85 % of the weight of the plants used.
* Distillation of macerated plants in hydroalcoholic solution. Wormwood should account for at least 50 % of the weight of the plants used.

The alcohol used must be ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin. Marc may not be used.

All of the solutions obtained which may be mixed must meet the set conditions.

b) Colour extraction

Colours are extracted from the plants listed in paragraph 4.1 by means of maceration in a hydroalcoholic solution.

c) Preparation of the liqueur

A mixture of sugar in accordance with paragraph 3(a) of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008, water and high-grade neutral ethyl alcohol is added to the flavouring solution, possibly with colouring solutions to supplement the liqueur preparation.

Flavourings obtained exclusively from wormwood found in the geographical area (defined in point 3) may be used when preparing the liqueur following the traditional methods referred to in paragraph 4.2(a) in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1334/2008 and Annex II thereto.

No artificial colouring or flavouring is added during any of the production stages.

The liqueur is composed of a minimum of 2 grams of dry sprigs (without roots) of wormwood per litre of finished product.

4.3 - Bottling

The product is bottled at the site where it is produced. Only glass bottles are used as glass is a neutral, inert material and therefore able to preserve the flavour and aromatic characteristics of the finished product. These containers also allow the product to be stored and kept in optimal conditions and offer good temperature resistance.

**5 - Details bearing out the link with the geographical environment or the geographical origin:**

5.1 Specificity of the area

5.1.1- Natural factors

The area in which ‘Génépi des Alpes’ is produced corresponds to the mountain range of the Western Alps. It is divided north to south by the border between France and Italy which more or less follows the watershed of the Alpine mountain range. The axial region either side of the border comprises high-elevation mountains, of an altitude frequently in excess of 3 000 metres. From this axis, valleys cut through the mountain range and join the surrounding plains, the Rhône basin to the west and the plains of the Po to the east.

There is considerably variety in the types of rock. The toughest peaks are largely of granite, comprising shale, gneiss and other metamorphic rock towards the centre, and sedimentary rock, largely, limestone and clay towards the edges, with a significant build-up towards the west, on the French side (sub-Alpine mountain ranges). Quaternary glaciation heavily shaped the relief, giving the profile of the valleys a typical glacial morphology and leaving huge deposits of moraine, made of compact clay blocks, at all altitudes.

The mountain climate is characterised by long, harsh winters and considerable variation between day-time and night-time temperatures. Precipitation is abundant and well distributed throughout the year, falling as snow during winter. Vegetation grows for a very short period, lasting three or four months, during which plants must grow and reproduce.

The name *génépi* is traditionally given to a group of four species of wormwood endemic to the higher regions of the Alps. They grow spontaneously in rock crevices, glacial moraine and high-altitude scree (above 2 000 metres) with low organic matter content. They are characterised by the way they have adapted to the harsh climate found at such altitudes during most of the year, and are particularly rich in flavour, various essential oils and bitter substances.

5.1.2- Human factors

Wormwood has traditionally been used as a medicinal plant by the inhabitants of the Alpine valleys. Apart from its digestive, carminative and tonic benefits, it was also recognised for its properties as a cough remedy and decongestant and has, as a result, been used for treating colds since the Middle Ages. Wormwood has traditionally been made into an infusion or liqueur by means of maceration.

Liqueur production has been developing in the Alps since the 18th century owing to the region’s rich variety of medicinal and aromatic plants. This is demonstrated by the range of plant-based liqueurs which the monks of the Grande Chartreuse monastery have been producing since the 1760s in the mountain range of the same name and in Voiron, according to their secret formulae. Distillation by still and production of ‘Génépi des Alpes’ began in the Occitan Valleys of Piedmont during the second half of the 18th century. A cookbook dating back to 1823 describes in detail the techniques and methods still in use today for producing the liqueur.

Small-scale production using traditional infusion methods began to develop as of the second half of the 19th century. Evidence of its development can be found in historical studies, documents and labels preserved by the oldest distilleries in the production region. The wormwood liqueur was developed and distributed in particular by the liqueur producers based in the outlying areas of the high mountains (Piedmont, Rhône-Alpes, Valle d’Aosta), beginning on a small scale as of the mid-19th century and later – as of the 1960s – in response to demand from winter sport tourism. As a result of this development, the plant began to be cultivated in order to respond to quantitative demand and to counter pressure on the wild plant due to excessive harvesting. Studies aimed at streamlining cultivation were carried out as of the 1970s, with regional and cross-border projects. Cultivation, which must be carried out at altitude, continues to be difficult but allows the botanical and chemical properties of the wild plant to be preserved. A minimum altitude of 1 500 metres was therefore set for the cultivation of the plant.

The fact that ‘Génépi des Alpes’ is included in the inventory of French culinary heritage is evidence of its present-day reputation. Here it is stated that the drink is currently ‘consumed throughout the Alps, particularly during the winter and summer holiday seasons’. Moreover, although it is ‘above all a digestif, [...] it can also be used as a flavouring in certain pastries’ (*Inventaire du patrimoine culinaire de la France –région Rhône-Alpes*, ALBIN MICHEL/CNAC – 1995).

5.2 - Specificity of the product

‘Génépi des Alpes’ is a digestif liqueur which is colourless or tinged with a pale yellow to light green colour, varying from translucent to transparent.

It is distinguished by its very specific floral and plant-based aromas and a characteristic bitter flavour from the plant itself which is brought out by the alcohol and rounded off by other complementary plants.

Of the many plants traditionally harvested in the Alps, wormwood has come to hold a special place over time. Initially used for its medicinal benefits, largely in a domestic context, it has stood out as a spirit drink since the 19th century thanks to the actions of liqueur producers based in the Alpine valleys both in France and Italy. Liqueur producers, often family-run businesses, have maintained and developed ancient formulae for producing the liqueur, thereby maintaining the tradition. The formulae, which were essentially a secret to begin with, often made use of other aromatic species which helped to broaden the drink’s palette of flavours. Liqueur producers continue to do so, according to their own, undisclosed formulae.

Commercial production experienced a new impetus during the second half of the 20th century as winter sports tourism developed, resulting in the emergence of a considerable local outlet.

5.3 - Causal link between the defined area and the product

Although small-scale production of the liqueur became established in the valleys and foothills of the Alps, for obvious environmental reasons the place where the plants are harvested has not changed. Not only are the species used restricted to the mountain range but the concentration of essential oils is at its greatest in the harshest mountain conditions. At low altitude, the plants are all the more sensitive to cryptogamic diseases and lose their characteristics. Harvesting of the wild plants in areas which are difficult to access is now supplementing by their cultivation at nearby sites where the aromatic character of the plants is preserved.

The prevailing floral and herbal notes in its aroma are directly linked to the quality of the plants harvested in an environment at the right altitude. The bitter taste, characteristic of wormwood, becomes apparent in the mouth and helps to ensure the general balance of the product. From 2010 to 2013, the Interreg project between Italy and France entitled *Génépi des Alpes and other medicinal plants - GENEALP* enhanced the value of the wormwood sector between the Alpine border regions of both countries (Alcotra project 2007-2013).

Studies carried out by the University of Turin on *Artemisia umbelliformis* (white genepì) demonstrated that ecotypes in the cross-border region were chemically and morphologically distinct from plants of other origin. The chemical profile of the plants is characterised by the specific presence of aromatic compounds, essential oils and bitter substances, giving ‘Génépi des Alpes’ a particular flavour profile which distinguishes it from products of the same category.

‘Génépi des Alpes’ is characterised by its high terpene and essential oil content, these being highly volatile compounds which are very susceptible to oxidation, particularly when the product is moved in bulk.

The wormwood liqueur is a delicate product and very sensitive to changes in temperature which modify the balance of flavours (sweet/bitter ratio) and reduce the aromatic intensity.

As such conditions can be encountered in particular when transporting the product in tanks and during storage, the product is therefore bottled at its place of production. This preserves its specific characteristics and allows the bottled products to be inspected. Such inspections allow the balance of flavours in the product to be checked once it has reduced. They also verify that no alterations occurred as a result of the product’s storage.

‘Génépi des Alpes’ therefore has a very strong cultural link with the Alps, stemming from family traditions and the production know-how of liqueur producers. Embodying both the culture of the high mountains and a skilled trade from the valleys of the Alps, the product reflects the complexity of mountain agro-economic systems in much the same way as the production of Alpine cheeses. Today it is a strong and recognised marker of the Alpine identity, like other local products which are now showcased thanks to the development of mountain leisure activities.

**6 - Any requirements laid down by Community and/or national provisions**

**7 - Name and address of the applicant**

*For France:* Association de Défense et de Gestion du Génépi des Alpes

Maison de la vigne et du Vin

Apremont 73190

*For Italy:* Associazione per la Tutela e la Valorizzazione del Genepy delle Valli Occitane Piemontesi altresì denominata Associazione Genepi Occitan *c/o* Espaci Occitan, Via Valmaira n. 19, 12025, Dronero (CN). Website: [www.genepy.it](http://www.genepy.it/).

**8 - Additional remarks (labelling)**

The liqueurs for which the ‘Génépi des Alpes’ geographical indication will be claimed may not be put on sale or sold without bearing the geographical indication referred to above in very visible characters.

**Part II - Reporting obligations and records**

In line with or supplementing stock records kept on account of general legislation, operators must comply with the following:

Claim statement for ‘Génépi des Alpes’ geographical indication

For volumes produced during the year n, the claim statement is sent to the protection and management association by 31 January of the year n+1.

It indicates:

* + the volumes produced;
	+ the name and address of the declarant.

Keeping records

Each operator must keep:

* + distillation, maceration and suspension records;
	+ production files enabling the amounts used to be verified;
	+ stock records allowing for traceability.

Products likely to carry the ‘Génépi des Alpes’ geographical indication must be clearly distinguished in these records.

**Part III - Main points to be checked**

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| **Points to be checked** | **Assessment methods** |
| **A) Structural rules** |  |
| Location of plant production sites within geographical area | Documents/pictures |
| Location of liqueur production sites within geographical area  | Documents/pictures |
| **B) Annual rules** |  |
| Proportion of wormwood in solutions | Documents |
| Proportion of wormwood in liqueur (finished product)  | Documents |

**REFERENCES TO INSPECTION BODIES**

**CERTIPAQ**

**Head Office: 11 Villa Thoréton – 75015 – PARIS**

**Tel: 01.45.30.92.92**

**Fax: 01.45.30.93.00**

certipaq@certipaq.com

[www.certipaq.com](http://www.certipaq.com/)

**Inspection body accredited in accordance with standard NF EN ISO/CEI 17065.**

**Institut National de l’Origine et de la Qualité (I.N.A.O.)**

**TSA 30003**

**93555 – MONTREUIL-SOUS-BOIS Cedex**

**Tel: (33) (0)1.73.30.38.00**

**Fax: (33) (0)1.73.30.38.04**

Email: info@inao.gouv.fr

The monitoring of compliance with this specification is carried out by a third-party body, providing a guarantee of expertise, independence and impartiality on behalf of the INAO, on the basis of an approved inspection plan.

The inspection plan follows up the self-inspections carried out by the operators on their own activities, and the internal checks carried out under the responsibility of the association for defence and management. It states the external checks carried out by the third-party body as well as the analytical and organoleptic tests. All the checks are carried out by random sampling.