GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION (GI) ‘HERBERO DE LA SIERRA DE MARIOLA’

A. denomination and category:

*Name:* ‘Herbero de la Sierra de Mariola’

*Category:* Other spirit drinks

B. description:

Anised spirit drink used with seeds or extracts of aniseed developed in the province of Alicante through the distillation and/or treatment with neutral alcohol of agricultural origin of plants in the areas of Mariola, which belongs to the province of Alicante. In the case of distillation, the minimum quantity of distillate in the final product should be 20 %.

The ‘Herbero de la Sierra de Mariola’ is distinguished by the large quantity of species used in its production, which is original in terms of the species and local flora compared with those in adjacent areas.

*Physical, chemical and/or organoleptic characteristics:*

Alcoholic strength between 22 % and 40 % vol.

The ‘Herbero de la Sierra de Mariola’ can be of two types: dry and soft. In the case of a soft type, the minimum sugar content must be 30 grams per litre.

*Appearance:* transparent or variation of light yellow-green to reddish brown.

*Odour: notes of grass* that vary according to the predominant herbs in its manufacture.

*Taste:* a background of aniseed and flavour of herbs from the local area, which vary according to the predominant herbs in its manufacture.

C. definition of the geographical area concerned:

Province of Alicante, in the Community of Valencia.

D. method of production

The ‘Herbero de la Sierra de Mariola’ can only be obtained in two ways, according to the traditional producers, who are the only ones using the typical plants from the area and in the proportion prescribed by the traditional formula:

1- by distillation

a. the product can be obtained by direct distillation of alcohol, aniseed plants and seeds or by distillation of these same macerated ingredients by introducing the plants in an aqueous-alcoholic solution of at least 60% vol. for a minimum of 10 days. The duration depends on each producer. The heads and tails resulting from this distillation are separated and can be redistilled as desired;

B.- the obtained alcohol can be used directly or, in quantities, contain added alcohol, water and an extract of aniseed extract in quantities necessary to obtain the final product, which must be based for at least two months before bottling. The minimum percentage of final product in the final product must be 20 % in absolute terms;

2- by macerating

a. in order to obtain the drink ‘Herbero de la Sierra de Mariola’ according to the maceration method, plants are added to a water-alcoholic solution of at least 60 % volume for a minimum of 10 days;

Afterwards, that alcohol is mixed with the extracts of aniseed, water and/or alcohol necessary to obtain the final alcoholic strength of the product, which must ‘rest’ for at least two months before bottling.

The plants used as the raw material originate from Mariola. At least four of the plants appearing on the list should be used:

sage, chamomile, mint, bean verbena, root of bean fleas, peppermint, cat tail, fennel, aniseed, balm, aigremoine (grass of Saint-Guillaume), sarriette, white-gray germander, lavender and thyme.

The colouring may be completed with authorised colouring.

The taste will be exclusively that which results from the plants used in the course of production. As mentioned above, only the aniseed extract can be used, to the exclusion of any other type of essence or extract.

There is no geographical restriction for bottling.

E. link to the environment or geographical origin

The history of this beverage dates back to the time of Muslim dominance on the land of Alicante. Over the centuries, the ‘Herbero de la Sierra de Mariola’ has become a great tradition in the Alicante province.

The Sierra de Mariola is a small mountain chain located in the north of the province of Alicante. It has an area of 17.257 ha which was declared natural parc by the government of Valencia in January 2002. The Sierra is delimited by the regions of Hoya de Alcoy, Condado de Cocentaina and Valle de Albaida and includes the municipalities of Muro de Alcoy, Cocentaina, Alcoon, Alcoy, Bañeres, Bocairent, Alfafara and Agres.

The area and the neighbouring areas have impressive botanical welth. Currently there are principally medicinal plants that are specific to the Mediterranean, such as sage, Chamomile, mint, pennyroyal, lemongrass verbena, blessed thistle root, peppermint, cat's tail, fennel, anise, lemon balm, agrimony (Saint-Guillaume grass), sarriette, white-grey germander, lavender and thyme. In the dry areas, the forest is replaced by plants adapted to aridity of the soil.

Sierra de Mariola, declared natural park, is characterised by the variety of its flora. This wealth is reflected not only in scientific work but also in popular assets, through songs and stories, in which these species that have aromatic and medicinal properties, used for gastronomic purposes for the production of alcoholic drinks and condiments or for pharmaceutical purposes, are of particular importance.

The work of the laboratory by Antonio José Cavances, at the end of the the century, was vital to consolidate the perception of Mariola, as a key botanical area, and many parts of the micronetwork of Valencia. Furthermore, Coutels cited several establishments producing spirits in the villages of the region (Ontinyent and Bañeres), these spirits being flavoured with the herbs present in abundance in Mariola.

The ‘Herbero de la Sierra de Mariola’ is particularly distinguished by the large quantity of species used, which is original in terms of number of species and the local flora of these mountains.

In the region of Alicante, for centuries, it has been customary to buy wild herbs in the mountain, in order to dry it in and to make herb teas in winter or to produce a liqueur such as the ‘Herbero de la Sierra de Mariola’, as one of the most popular songs in the Valencia language tells:

*«Serra de Mariola*

*Serra de Mariola*

*Tota floretes*

*Tota floretes, sí*

*Tota floretes, no*

*Tota floretes*

*A on van les socarrades?*

*A on van les socarrades?*

*A fer bogetes*

*A fer bogetes, sí*

*A fer bogetes, no*

*A fer bogetes*

*Mentre els fadrins canten*

*Mentre els fadrins canten*

*Per les casetes*

*Per les casetes sí*

*Per les casetes no*

*Per les casetes*

*Omplint l’amada Serra*

*Omplint l’amada Serra*

*De cançonetes*

*De cançonetes sí*

*De cançonetes no*

*De cançonetes»*

In addition, the history and culture of Mariola are closely linked to the images currently used in trade marks and the identification of beverages. For example, some refer to ‘cavas’ (wells which served to catch and store snow for the summer) with photographs showing the trade in snow and the ice industry, of great importance in the 18th century.

Originally, these aromatic plants were used for medicinal purposes. Furthermore, people have started to use them at home for making beverages and infusions. Over the years, the production of spirit drinks has evolved in such a way that the ‘Herbero de la Sierra de Mariola’ has started to be developed in an industrial manner at the end of the 19th century.

Thr Herbero is the result of a long and collective effort to exploit the natural resources of an area that has a rich biodiversity. Each bottle is an open book, which contains stories, captions, rituals, traditions and, above all, the wisdom of a people’, which we must preserve (Segundo Ríos).

The raw materials are always the same as in the past, even though the production process is more systemised and controlled.

In its study entitled ‘Plantas de los Herbero de la Sierra de Mariola’, ‘Ríos Ruiz’, ethnobotanist at the University of Alicante, precised that *‘most of the species used in the traditional ‘herberos’ produced in the territory of Sierra de Mariola have essential oils which, depending on their concentration, may change the combination of the various flavours of this variety of plants. Four families provide most of the components of plant liqueurs from the regions studied; in decreasing order: labiées (46 %), composées (16 %), ombellifères (11 %) and ruataceae (11 %); the remaining percentage (16 %) corresponds to other families, each of which represents around 3 % of the flora analysed. Some species are mostly present (between 50% and 80%) in the "herberos", which reveals the existence of a standard or basic standards in the formulation of these liqueurs of plants.*

The analysis of the data in this study has shown that 84 % of the botanical species used in the production of ‘herberos’ are aboriginal, whereas the 16 % are not. This highlights the very good knowledge of the local flora acquired by the producers of ‘herberos’, obtained from testing carried out generation after generation and through oral knowledge transmissions. It should also be noted that most of the non-native species are part of ancient cultures which, in some cases, have already become wild in the area and are also part of the popular culture of the territory. By looking more closely at the formulas of each of the "herberos", we can see that a high percentage of species are endemic to the Valencian Community. Of the 84% of indigenous species present, 21% (9 species) are endemic to the Iberian Levant and are mainly limited to the provinces of Alicante, Valencia and Castellón. Six of these species are used in a minority way and in minimal quantities thus giving a particularity to each of the liquors of plants elaborated in the zone ".

F. Regulations:

* Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2008 on the definition, designation, presentation and labelling and the protection of the geographical indications of spirits and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 1576/89;

**G. Name and contact of the applicant**

Consejo Regulador de las Denominaciones Específicas Bebidas Espirituosas Tradicionales de Alicante

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**H. Labelling**

The ‘Herbero de la Sierra de Mariola’ has a ‘specific name’ on the labels.

Furthermore, it is necessary to specify on the label whether the method of production is ‘distillation’ or ‘maceration’.

Likewise, the product will be identified by an alphanumeric code affixed to the bottle in such a way that it cannot be used again and to ensure that the product is traceable.

This mark of application will consist of the logo and the words ‘Consejo Regulador Denominaciones Específica’ and ‘Bebidas Espirituosas Tradicionales de Alicante’.

**I. monitoring**

I.1 competent authority

Dirección General de Desarrollo Rural y Política Agraria Común

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**I.2. Tasks**

Organoleptic and/or analytical testing

Annual control of the spirit drink produced in each campaign by taking samples of the batches of ‘Herbero de la Sierra de Mariola’ for organoleptic and chemical analysis purposes in order to verify compliance with the parameters set out in section B and compliance with the other elements described in this technical information sheet.

Method of inspection

The checks referred to in the preceding paragraph shall be carried out at least once a year and shall be carried out by random sampling based on a risk analysis or by systematic sampling.

The evidence that the ‘Herbero de la Sierra de Mariola’ drink has been prepared in accordance with the specifications in the geographical indication shall take into account the following aspects, which shall be assessed on an annual basis:

— Proof of the existence of records held by operators, in which they give detailed information, inter alia, on plants used for the preparation and time limits laid down by the product specifications for distillation or treatment operations,

— The existence of systems for controlling, monitoring and recording the conformity of these operations with the requirements laid down in the legislation and their capacity to guarantee the product’s tracking, both in terms of bottling and of the raw materials used,

— Proof that economic operators elaborate the ‘Herbero de la Sierra de Mariola’ in accordance with the conditions set out in these specifications and store it in suitable installations to ensure optimum conservation;

— Proof that the operators control, during storage, the maintenance of the physical, chemical and organoleptic conditions of the product.