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(Announcements)

OTHER ACTS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Publication of an application pursuant to Article 50(2)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs

(2013/C 155/03)

This publication confers the right to oppose to the application pursuant to Article 51 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽¹⁾.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006

on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs ⁽²⁾

'ISTARSKI PRŠUT'

EC No: HR-PDO-0005-01041-04.10.2012

PGI () PDO (X)

1. Name

'Istarski pršut'

2. Member State or third country

Republic of Croatia

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff

3.1. Type of product

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

3.2. Description of product to which the name in point 1 applies

'Istarski pršut' is dry-cured meat product, produced from pig's ham (hind leg), without rind and subcutaneous fat tissue, and with pelvic bones. The fresh hams are firstly dry-brined with sea salt and spices, then air-dried, not smoked, in total undergoing the ripening process for at least 12 months.

The age of 'Istarski pršut' is counted from the first day of brining. If fresh ham weighs up to 16 kg, the production process will last for at least 12 months, and if it weighs over 16 kg, it will last for at least 15 months.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 93, 31.3.2006, p. 12. Replaced by Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

'Istarski pršut' is elongated in shape because it also contains the pelvic bones. The foot is detached in the tarsal joint, and the rind is also removed except for the part under the tarsal joint (10-15 cm). The ham has correctly rounded edges, flat surfaces that are clean or with a thin layer of mould, which influences ham's longer shelf life. The muscle tissue sectional view has uniform pink-red colour without any pronounced discoloration, and fat tissue must be white. 'Istarski pršut' has distinctive characteristic smell of the dried ripe pork meat and herbs. It has a typical full, intense flavour and moderate salinity.

When the product is ready for sale it has the following physical-chemical properties: water content must be less than 55 %, the content of sodium chloride less than 8 % and water activity (aw) must be under 0,93.

'Istarski pršut' must weigh at least 7 kg at the time when it is being placed on the market.

3.3. Raw materials (for processed products only)

'Istarski pršut' is produced from pigs' fresh ham:

offspring of pure breed Swedish Landrace, German Landrace and Large White from domesticated breeding;

two-breed crosses between these breeds;

backcross between these breeds;

three-breed crosses between F1 generation (Landrace x Large White) x Duroc breed;

The average body mass of pigs in groups at slaughtering must be in the range of 180 kg \pm 10 % and the pig must be at least nine months old. Fresh hams are processed in a way that the pelvic bones are left (ilium, ischial and pubic), while the sacrum bone and caudal vertebrae are removed. The sacrum bone is removed cutting through in the sacroiliac joint and the foot is cut in the tarsal joint. The rind and the subcutaneous tissue are removed from the ham up to 10-15 cm from the tarsal joint. The processed fresh ham must weigh at least 13 kg.

3.4. Feed (for products of animal origin only)

During the fattening phase, the pigs used for 'Istarski pršut' production are fed with compound. All ingredients of the compound feed, except minerals, vitamins and other additives, must originate from the area allowed for pig raising and mentioned in Section 4. The origin of all ingredients has to be traceable from the production place to the stable and verified by the authorised certification body.

In the last fattening phase (above 110 kg), it is permissible to replace up to 50 % of corn with barley. Apart from that, wheat or wheat bran, fresh clover and alfalfa, pumpkins, cabbages, fodder beet, sugar beet pulp, whey and cooked potatoes can be used for feeding the pigs. It is forbidden to use brewer's spent grain and swills for fattening the pigs.

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

All production phases of 'Istarski pršut', from salting and pressing, through drying and ripening to the finished product, must take place within the geographical area specified in Section 4.

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

'Istarski pršut' can be marketed in one piece (integral form with bones) or in the form of packages that may contain de-boned ham, larger or smaller chunks of cured ham or sliced cured ham. These types of cured ham must be packed in vacuum or modified atmosphere.

The process of de-boning the cured ham, chopping into pieces or slices for portioning and packaging for the purpose of further selling, has to take place only in the production area of 'Istarski pršut'. By limiting the portioning and packaging of cured ham to the area of its production the process control is greatly simplified, the application of traceability is facilitated and the possibility of fraud and abuse of labels is minimised. Also, keeping the slicing and packaging within the production area allows the producers to carry out these procedures by themselves or have it done by experienced staff skilled in procedures with 'Istarski pršut', its specifics and quality, thus ensuring the maintenance of the original product quality even after slicing and packaging.

3.7. Specific rules concerning labelling

Upon completion of the ripening phase, all cured hams, which met the requirements of specification, get the brand. It consists of a collective mark and the code of the producer of 'Istarski pršut' identical to the veterinary control number of the production facility. The collective mark is shown below.



ISTARSKI PRŠUT

When the whole product or packaging of any kind (whole cured ham, pieces or slices of cured ham) are put on the market, in addition to the information required by legislation, the product must be labelled with the denomination 'Istarski pršut' and the collective mark of the product. The denomination 'Istarski pršut' must be clearly legible and indelible and must be more clearly highlighted, in size, type and colour of the letters (typography), than any other labels, including the collective mark, the number of production batches (series) and the producer's trademarks, images and inscriptions.

Beside the designation of origin 'Istarski pršut' it is not permitted to specify other terms such as adjectives: real, traditional, handmade, typical, native, homemade, etc., or terms that represent toponyms on the Istrian peninsula, no matter which language are pronounced or written in.

4. Concise definition of the geographical area

The production area of raw material intended for use in production of 'Istarski pršut' is limited to the following counties in the Republic of Croatia: Istarska, Primorsko-Goranska (limited only to the mainland, excluding the islands), Karlovačka, Sisačko-Moslavačka, Zagrebačka, Bjelovarsko-Bilogorska, Koprivničko-Križevačka, Međimurska, Virovitičko-Podravska, Požeško-Slavonska, Brodsko-Posavska, Osječko-Baranjska i Vukovarsko-Srijemska. Designation of origin 'Istarski pršut' was first registered in 2002 which enables the production area of the raw material to be wider than the production area of the end-product itself.

The production area of 'Istarski pršut' is limited to the area within the administrative borders of Istria County, with the exception of the islands that belong to the Istria County, where the production is not allowed. The Istria County includes the following towns and municipalities: Buje, Buzet, Labin, Novigrad, Pazin, Poreč, Pula, Rovinj, Umag, Vodnjan, Bale, Barban, Brtonigla, Cerovlje, Fažana, Funtana, Gračišće, Grožnjan, Kanfanar, Karojba, Kaštelir-Labinci, Kršan, Lanišće, Ližnjan, Lupoglav, Marčana, Medulin, Motovun, Oprtalj, Pićan, Raša, Sveta Nedjelja, Sveti Lovreč, Sveti Petar u Šumi, Svetvinčenat, Tar-Vabriga, Tinjan, Višnjan, Vižinada, Vrsar i Žminj.

5. Link with the geographical area

5.1. Specificity of the geographical area

The most significant characteristic of the Istrian peninsula is the Mediterranean climate that gradually changes, moving from the coast towards inland, and slowly turns into continental under the influence of cold air flowing from the mountains and the proximity of the Alps. The Istrian climate is characterised by frequent winds in winter, which in almost 50 % of the cases blow from the north and east directions. Such distribution of winds in winter period is favourable for the ham production, which at that time begins (salting and drying). Namely, the specific natural conditions suitable for drying ham in the winter period are created thanks to the winds coming from the northern, north-eastern and eastern direction. Especially suitable is *Bura*, strong north-east wind coming from the direction of the Učka Mountain, which blows from land to sea. Due to the influence of Mediterranean climate, where temperatures are not extremely low in winter, the air is dry and cool winds are frequent, the natural conditions in Istria represent an ideal environment for the production of 'Istarski pršut'. The specificity of the climate enables 'Istarski pršut' to be only air, not smoke, dried. This is what significantly influences the quality and uniqueness of 'Istarski pršut' compared to other cured hams.

Famous and distinctive taste of 'Istarski pršut' is not only the result of climate, but of experienced and skilled generations of Istrian farmers as well. In fact, one of the most important economic activities of every Istrian farmer's household was raising and slaughtering pigs and the production of a number of traditional products from dried pork meat, among which the cured ham differs from the others by quality and significance.

Traditionally, the pigs were raised more than one year and fed with various feedstuffs that were available on the farm in different times of the year: clover and alfalfa, pumpkins, cabbages, fodder beet, whey, cooked potatoes, etc. The slaughter took place only when the pigs were very heavy, way over 200 kg. The method of cured ham production, that in the past slightly differed from village to village, was unified already in the 19th century, especially in the way the producers prepared and used the brine, the way they pressed the ham and the time these operations lasted. One of the particularities of the Istrian method developed long time ago has been the composition of the dry-brine made of salt and one or more spices (black pepper, garlic, laurel, rosemary). Another one is the way the hind leg is separated from the half carcass and the way ham is shaped and processed. For instance, the traditional and very unique way of ham processing has been maintained from the time when rural households had the need to melt into fat as much adipose tissue as possible, and thus preserve it for later use. Therefore, according to the traditional recipe, in the first stage of preparation of the ham, all rind and subcutaneous fat tissue is removed from the fresh ham, which is a rarity and an exception compared to the way the cured ham is produced in other areas. Another peculiarity in the shaping process is that the hip bones are not removed, so in that way more meat remains and the ham is bigger.

Up until recently, most of the rural households in Istria produced cured hams, so the traditional way of production could have been easily preserved. There is no evidence that any Istrian producer of cured ham has ever used a method different than that inherited from his ancestors. The art of ham production in Istria dates back for several centuries, during which the traditional methods of production were improved. The earliest record found so far, which explicitly mentions the *pršut*, comes from the 1580, when in the Glagolitic records of Roč municipality it was documented that among other foods cured ham was ordered for the prefect's wedding ceremony (Dražen Vlahov, *Knjiga računa općine Roč (1566-1628)*, Državni arhiv u Pazinu (State Archive in Pazin), Pazin, 2009, pp. 102-103). Also in Roč, but some time later, in 1594, cured ham was ordered and served for lunch to the Rašpor captain (the governor of the Venetian part of northern Istria) and his entourage, on the occasion of the festivity for honouring St Marina (*ibid.*, pp. 110-111). One record from 1612 states that 'four hundred Uskoks crossed Učka ... The Uskoks stole a lot of cattle large quantities of cheese, cured ham, wine and other foods' (Miroslav Bertoša, *Istra: doba Venecije*, Zavičajna naklada Žakan Juri, Pula, 1995, p. 318). One document from the 1810 states that the most expensive of all the meat was salted pork meat — ham and bacon (Nevio Šettó, *Napoleon u Istri*, IKK Grozd, Pula, 1989, pp. 54, 100, 112, 116, 139, 141).

5.2. Specificity of the product

Features that characterise 'Istarski pršut' and which significantly distinguish it from other cured hams are the result of cultural heritage of the Istrian rural community's and the overall natural potential that the Istrian peninsula has for the production and processing of agricultural and food products. The specificity of 'Istarski pršut' is primarily determined by three factors: the raw material, the production technology based on tradition and the end-product's organoleptic properties.

The specificities of the raw material are the result of controlled breeding of certain genotypes of pigs which are fed according to special requirements in extended fattening in order to get body mass of 180 kg. Heavy pigs at slaughter are needed to get large weights of fresh ham, necessary due the loss of considerable amount of water in the drying and ripening stages.

The traditional technology requires the processing of ham in the way that left pelvic bones attached (*os ilium*, *os pubis* and *os Ishii*), which is not a standard procedure in the production of cured ham in other regions. Specifically, after the ham is processed and rounded off, the femur head (*caput femoris* — the end of the femur) is hidden, while in other types of cured ham, it can be seen from the inside, medial side and is one of their main visual characteristics. In 'Istarski pršut' this head is hidden because it is inside the pelvic bone (*acetabulum*).

Completely unusual technique used in processing the ham is also the removal of rind and subcutaneous fat tissue from the entire surface, i.e. to the meat. The processed hams are sea salt dry-brined with the addition of pepper, garlic, laurel and rosemary. The addition of so many spices during salting represents another distinguishing feature in the production of 'Istarski pršut'. The lack of the rind and fat tissue not only causes slightly more drying than it is the case with other hams, but also one more distinguishing feature: the growth of moulds on external surfaces of the ham. The presence of surface moulds during the drying and ripening phases represents another distinctive external characteristic of 'Istarski pršut'.

The specific organoleptic properties of 'Istarski pršut' are evident first of all in its external appearance since it lacks rind and subcutaneous fat tissue, it also contains the pelvic bones, which give it an unusually elongated shape, and it often, on the surface, has a bigger or smaller clusters of mould.

The final product is characterised by a particular flavour, a mild, slightly salty taste, uniform pink-red colour and the desirably consistency of muscle tissue. It contains no additives because it is produced in traditional way.

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 causal link between 'Istarski pršut' and the area of Istria can be attributed to the existence of favourable conditions for the production of cured meat products. The natural conditions of Istria are influenced by the Mediterranean climate, so there are no extremely low temperatures in winter, and the air is cooled and dried by frequent winds. The average values of temperature and relative humidity from December to March optimally facilitate natural meat drying. The initial low temperature and a gradual decrease in relative humidity allow a regular ham drying process. Due to that fact and in order to get a significant influence of the natural conditions over the product, the phase of salting hams (the initial phase of production) may take place only during the period between 15 October and 20 March. The seasonality of production, namely the time limit imposed on the first production phase, represents one of the main pillars of the traditional way of production.

With the arrival of spring and warmer days, hams are transferred for ripening to the cellars or other similar rooms, where there are no major fluctuations in temperature and humidity. These conditions provide an ideal environment for the production of traditional 'Istarski pršut' that is only air not smoke-dried, thereby significantly influencing its quality and uniqueness compared to other cured hams.

The features that characterise 'Istarski pršut' and which significantly distinguish it from other cured hams are the result of not only the climatic conditions, but of the cultural heritage of the Istrian rural communities as well, that is from the experience and skills of many generations of Istrian farmers. They produced cured hams using only very heavy pigs (weighing over 180 kg), which were fed with clover, alfalfa, pumpkins, cabbages, fodder beet, whey, boiled potatoes, etc. Although the mentioned feed is no longer used in the modern fattening, it is permissible to use it in the final fattening phase in order to keep the traditional characteristics of fattening and to obtain a special quality meat.

The method of processing the ham in the production of 'Istarski pršut' has been maintained from the time when the rural households had the need to melt as much adipose tissue into fat as possible and thus preserve it for later use. Therefore, according to traditional recipes, in the first phase of preparation of 'Istarski pršut', the rind and subcutaneous fat tissue are removed up to the meat, which is a rarity, almost an exception, compared to the way of production in other regions where the ham, as a rule, is dried with the rind. A further feature that makes 'Istarski pršut' different from other hams is associated with the traditional production technology that requires a treatment of the ham in the way that leaves the pelvic bones on it. Because of the peculiar processing of ham, 'Istarski pršut' is therefore always slightly bigger and heavier than the cured hams produced in other regions, although the latter have the rind and subcutaneous fat tissue.

The drying of the ham without rind and subcutaneous fat tissue, which causes direct exposure to the air of the whole surface of the muscle tissue and covering of the surface with mould during the ripening phase, certainly results in a slightly different development of ripening process and later in distinctive organoleptic properties of 'Istarski pršut'.

The specificity of the aroma and taste of 'Istarski pršut' is influenced by different spices added in the dry-brine. The influence of spices on the aroma of 'Istarski pršut' is very important, because — unlike other types of cured ham — the entire surface of the ham is in contact with the spices, so their flavour can penetrate more easily and more deeply into all parts of the ham.

Reference to publication of the specification

(Article 5(7) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 ⁽³⁾)

Web page of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Croatia (national authority):

<http://www.mps.hr/UserDocsImages/Specifikacija%20proizvoda.pdf>

⁽³⁾ See footnote 2.