C/2024/1985

6.3.2024

Publication of an application for registration of a name 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

(C/2024/1985)

This publication confers the right to oppose the application pursuant to Article 51 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council ([1]) within 3 months from the date of this publication.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'Caciottone di Norcia'

EU No: PGI-IT-02807 – 19.10.2021

1. **Name(s) of PGI**

'Caciottone di Norcia'

2. **Member State or Third Country**

Italy

3. **Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff**

3.1. *Type of product*

Class 1.3. Cheeses

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

'Caciottone di Norcia' PGI is cylindrical in shape, with rounded faces and a straight heel. In terms of size, the diameter is 20-22 cm and the heel height is 9-11 cm. It weighs 3,2 kg (± 12 %).

'Caciottone di Norcia' PGI is made from pasteurised cow's and sheep's milk. The characteristic feature of the cheese is that the ratio of cow's milk is 90-95 % and that of sheep's milk is 5-10 %.

The taste of 'Caciottone di Norcia' PGI is fragrant and aromatic with a characteristic aftertaste of cream. On the nose, the aromas/scents are of milk, warmed milk and/or melted butter.

In terms of its outward appearance, the rind is thin, smooth and washed and it ranges in colour from straw yellow to ochre yellow depending on the degree of ripening. The paste is soft and buttery, becoming firmer closer to the rind. When sliced, it is white to straw-coloured, with small eyes when split.

In order that the product may be identified on the market, the following physico-chemical characteristics (on dry matter basis) have been specified:

Minimum protein content: 37,00 g per 100 g (dry matter)

Minimum fat content: 46,00 g per 100 g (dry matter)

Minimum sodium chloride content: 2,10 g per 100 g (dry matter)

Minimum moisture content, depending on the type of ripening:

Dolce (mild) ripening, 20 to 60 days, 31 %

Medio (medium) ripening, 61 to 120 days, 23 %

Riserva (Reserve) ripening, 121 to 365 days, 21 %.

'Caciottone di Norcia' can be sold whole or in portions.

([1]) OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2012/1151/oj

3.3. *Feed (for products of animal origin only) and raw materials (for processed products only)*

None of the feed used is subject to quality conditions that differ from those under the legislation in force.

'Caciottone di Norcia' PGI cheese is made from a combination of cow's milk (90-95 %) and sheep's milk (5-10 %).

3.4. *Specific steps in production that must take place in the defined geographical area*

The steps in production for 'Caciottone di Norcia' PGI are as follows: milk storage; pasteurisation; coagulation; breaking up the curds; forming and heat treatment; salting; and ripening.

All steps, from the processing of the raw materials to production - including ripening - must take place in the identified geographical area.

3.5. *Specific rules concerning slicing, grating, packaging, etc. of the product the registered name refers to*

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3.6. *Specific rules concerning labelling of the product the registered name refers to*

The following information must be clearly and legibly displayed on each cheese or packaged part thereof:

the name 'Caciottone di Norcia IGP' (Caciottone di Norcia PGI), in any font, as long as it is larger than anything else printed on the packaging;

and the words: 'Caciottone di Norcia IGP' (Caciottone di Norcia PGI), forming the logo, with the preposition 'di' enclosed in a shaded-in circle. The following printing specifications apply in order that it is easily recognisable to the consumer:

font type: Souvenir Medium Demi;

Pantone colour to be used in the logo: Reflex Blue.



However, the logo may be used in greyscale or black and white.

4. **Concise definition of the geographical area**

The production area for 'Caciottone di Norcia' PGI cheese comprises the census and administrative boundaries of the municipalities of Norcia, Cascia, Monteleone di Spoleto, Preci and Poggiodomo, all of which belong to the Valnerina area in the province of Perugia.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

'Caciottone di Norcia' PGI cheese has reputational, morphological and organoleptic characteristics that are objective and unequivocally demonstrable and which differentiate it significantly from other cheeses in the same product category.

Milk blends were used to make cheese in Valnerina even before the middle of the 20th century, mainly due to the conditions of deprivation that were typical of country life in the area at that time.

The production process for 'Caciottone di Norcia' was also beneficial in terms of allowing a much longer shelf life thanks to the addition of sheep's milk. This advantage should not be underestimated, particularly in the past when salt was a scarce commodity and people did not have refrigerators. As a cheese made from milk blends, 'Caciottone di Norcia' was similar in terms of its palatability and delicate characteristics to Caciotta cheese made from cow's milk, increasing its success and making it more popular among consumers since the beginning of the last century. Over the years, the reputation of 'Caciottone di Norcia' has increased significantly, to the point that this product is now synonymous with the production area.

For conservation reasons, wheels of cheese made using cow's milk have traditionally always had smaller diameters and heel sizes. For the aromas to be preserved, they had to be eaten quickly. 'Caciottone di Norcia', on the other hand, was larger in size. The fact that it was made from milk blends not only enhanced the taste, which was a lot less strong than cheese made solely from sheep's milk, but it also made it possible to increase the size of the cheeses, as there was no problem as regards conservation and ripening. Cheesemakers in the Norcian mountains have specialised since time immemorial in the production of 'Caciottone di Norcia'. There is a specific historical reason for this choice having been made by the local inhabitants.

The migratory herding of sheep towards the valleys of Umbria and Lazio in the winter months meant that sheep's milk was obviously in short supply during that season. During these periods, particularly in the more outlying areas such as Castelluccio, only a small number of sheep remained in the sheds. These were kept for their meat and for their milk, to feed households during the harsh winter months. In those months, mixed cheese was made by blending the nutrient-rich cow's milk with sheep's milk.

Essentially, 'Caciottone di Norcia' encapsulates the merits of both types of cheese, a quality that is well established in consumers' perceptions outside the region. There are many direct testimonies concerning frequent orders and exports from Norcia to the area around Rome, organised by many traders based in Lazio from the post-war period onwards.

This is confirmed by research conducted on the archives, such as the photographic records of the famous Mostra Mercato del Tartufo Nero e dei Prodotti della Montagna [Black Truffle and Mountain Products Fair] that has been held in Norcia since the late 1950s, where 'Caciottone di Norcia' is always featured among the products on display.

There are also photographic records from the 1970s and 1980s which bear witness to the rise in fame of 'Caciottone di Norcia', particularly some taken from an edition of the fair held in the early 1980s, where 'Caciottone' can be seen. A photo from the same period shows a stand with the product list and respective prices, and the word '*caciottoni*' is visible. There is a photo of the stand run by the cheese-making cooperative from the 1970s which clearly depicts 'Caciottoni di Norcia' wheels with the typical 'Caciottone di Norcia' logo.

However, it was from the 1950s onwards that the blending of the different types of milk (sheep's milk and cow's milk) became known to the wider public - and not just to Italian consumers - gradually becoming a standard technique used in producing 'Caciottone di Norcia' cheese.

The first objective reference to the link can be seen in an article by Annalisa Zordan published by *Gambero Rosso*, which mentions 'Caciottone di Norcia'. This article promoted the Master Cheesemaker Championship organised by the Università dei Sapori culinary school in Perugia and held in Vallo di Nera (PG) in June 2012 as part of the Fior di Cacio event.

Source: Zordan A., *Gambero Rosso,* 'Mastro Formaggiaio: la caciotta tagliata ad arte' [Master cheesemaker: skill in slicing caciotta cheese].

As further evidence of the link with the geographical area, we would also mention the professional development course 'L'Orologio dei Formaggi' [Round cheese board] organised by the Università dei Sapori centre for food and hospitality training and culture in 2010, which focused on techniques for pairing cheese with wine, spreadables, fruit and bread. The course description included 'Caciottone di Norcia' along with other well-known Italian cheeses such as 'Asiago' PDO, 'Taleggio' PDO, 'Raschera' PDO and others.

Source: Università dei Sapori, 2010, professional development course 'L'Orologio dei Formaggi'

The designation is so well established that there was an initiative by one of the largest Italian retailers to support the town of Norcia after the most recent earthquake of 2016. The press release included a reference to 'Caciottone di Norcia' as one of the most renowned products from the area and in need of protection.

Source: ASPIAG SERVICE S.r.l., a concessionaire of the Despar brand in Triveneto, Emilia-Romagna and Lombardy, 2017, press release 'Despar Teatro Italia: Billi Brass Quintet in concerto, per ricordare il terremoto che ha colpito Norcia un anno fa' [Despar Theatre Italy: Billi Brass Quintet in concert, in memory of the earthquake that hit Norcia a year ago], Media & Press department, 27 October 2017.

Another important confirmation of the link with the geographical area is the reference made to 'Caciottone di Norcia' PGI in *InForma*, the hard copy and online periodical with technical and specialised gastronomic/cultural information for the cheese sector, managed by ONAF. ONAF, i.e. the 'National Organisation of Cheese Tasters', set up at the initiative of the Cuneo Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture, is the most important and authoritative organisation in the cheese sector. ONAF's main focus has been providing courses for tasters and master tasters. These courses have been running since 1991 with the aim of promoting, disseminating, expanding and raising the profile of the culture of cheese-making and dairy products.

Source: Baccarelli C. 2020, *InForma* specialist magazine, 'Cacciottone Norcia', page 47, edition No 34, December 2020.

Further confirmation can be found in a 2016 press release from AGI, one of the most authoritative press agencies in Italy.

Within days of the earthquake recorded in the Valnerina area in October 2016, AGI published an article entitled 'Terremoto: dalle lenticchie al ciauscolo, il patrimonio minacciato' [Earthquake: from lentils to *ciauscolo* (a type of salami), heritage endangered]. The article lists the most important products in the area, including 'Caciottone di Norcia' PGI, as agri-food heritage to be preserved. It is referred to and recognised in this article as *patrimonio culturale del Paese, oltre che economico ed occupazionale* [part of the country's cultural, economic and employment heritage].

Source: AGI-Agenzia Giornalistica Italia S.p.A. 2016 'Terremoto: dalle lenticchie al ciauscolo, il patrimonio minacciato', article published on 2 November 2016.

More objective proof of the reputation and link with the geographical area is documented in the publication *L'Umbria dei Formaggi*, a study of cheese-making in the Umbria region including a guide to the most important cheeses. One section of this volume is devoted to 'Caciottone di Norcia'.

Source: Promocamera - a special agency of the Perugia Chamber of Commerce (ed.), *L'Umbria dei Formaggi* ed. 2022, page 42, 'Caciottone Norcia'.

A recent source demonstrating the link with the geographical area is documented in the ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics) initiative 'L'Italia Buona', as part of the 7th General Agriculture Census. The 'L'Italia Buona' competition showcased Italian agri-tourism holdings that stand out for their 'choice of raw materials in food preparation' as a 'distinguishing feature that combines excellence with the quality of distinctiveness'. The recipes that qualified for the final stage were collected in a recipe book published by ISTAT and, in accordance with the rules of the competition, the raw materials and ingredients were also mentioned. One of the finalist recipes was an original dish named 'Sua Maestà l'Uovo croccante con Tartufo' [His Majesty, the Crispy Egg with Truffle]. 'Caciottone di Norcia' was clearly mentioned as an ingredient on the recipe card.

Source: 7th General Census of Agriculture, 2022, 'L'Italia Buona' competition, recipe 'Sua Maestà l'Uovo croccante con Tartufo' [His Majesty, the Crispy Egg with Truffle].

Lastly, the morphological and organoleptic factors mean that the product is recognisable to consumers. Certain factors, such as the artisanal cheese-making techniques, help to give 'Caciottone di Norcia' PGI its distinctive character:

— the fact that a blend of 90-95 % cow's milk and 5-10 % sheep's milk is traditionally used. The sheep's milk was traditionally added in order to increase the size of the cheese and extend its shelf life while maintaining its characteristic freshness, but also to give a more distinctive taste than that of cheese made exclusively from cow's milk;

— the paste is soft and buttery, becoming firmer closer to the rind. The typical texture of the paste is due to the elasticity gained by the curds during the stage in which they are worked in the vat, particularly by adjusting the variables of time and temperature;

— when sliced, it is white to straw-coloured, with small eyes when split. This characteristic of 'Caciottone di Norcia' PGI is due to the size of the curds (comparable to corn kernels), and to the structure of the pellicle of the granules, which helps give the cheese just the right amount of moisture according to the traditional cheese-making method.

Reference to publication of the specification

http://www.politicheagricole.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/3335