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Publication of a communication of approval of a standard amendment to a product specification for a name in the wine sector as referred to in Article 17(2) and (3) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/33

(C/2025/1146)

This communication is published in accordance with Article 17(5) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/33 [1].

COMMUNICATING THE APPROVAL OF A STANDARD AMENDMENT

'Vernaccia di San Gimignano'

PDO-IT-A1292-AM02

Date of communication: 20.11.2024

DESCRIPTION OF AND REASONS FOR THE APPROVED AMENDMENT

1. **Clarification regarding the Sauvignon variety**

Description:

With reference to the grape varieties that may be used in addition to the combination of grape varieties up to a maximum of 10 %, the word 'blanc' has been added to the 'Sauvignon' grape variety.

Reason:

Clarification of which grape variety may be used as an additional variety up to a maximum of 10 %.

The amendment concerns Article 2(2) of the product specification.

2. **Deletion of Annex 1 and its references**

Description:

Annex 1 to the product specification concerning the list of varieties suitable for cultivation in the Tuscany region has been deleted, as has the reference thereto in the specification.

Reason:

As the combination of grape varieties already refers to the additional grape varieties included in the list of the Tuscany region, it was considered preferable to delete the list in Annex 1, in order to avoid continuous updating of the list.

The amendment concerns Annex 1 and Article 2(3) of the product specification.

3. **Correction of the paragraph on maximum grape yield**

Description:

The paragraph on maximum grape yield has been corrected by replacing the words 'this specification' with the precise publication references of the product specification.

Reason:

This amendment has become necessary in order to clarify the date of publication of the specification, to which reference is to be made with regard to vineyards whose average maximum yield must not exceed 4,0 kg per actual vine.

This amendment concerns Article 4(7) of the product specification.

[1] OJ L 9, 11.1.2019, p. 2.

4. **Update of legislation**

Description:

Some legislative references have been updated or replaced by a generic reference to the legislation in force.

Reason:

Updating of sectoral legislation.

The amendment concerns Articles 5(9), 5(10) and 7(4) (formerly 7(3)) of the product specification.

5. **Deletion of the paragraph on setting a production limit lower than that laid down in the specification by the region**

Description:

The paragraph stating that the Tuscany Region, on a proposal from the Consorzio di Tutela, after consulting the relevant trade organisations, could issue a decree to establish, from year to year prior to the harvest, a production limit lower than that laid down in the specification, notifying forthwith the control body and the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies, has been deleted.

Reason:

The provision has been superseded.

The amendment concerns Article 4(9) of the product specification, which has been completely deleted.

6. **Deletion of the paragraph on the possibility for the Ministry to amend the minimum limits for total acidity and sugar-free extract**

Description:

The paragraph allowing the Ministry to amend the minimum limits for total acidity and sugar-free extract laid down in the specification has been deleted.

Reason:

The provision has been superseded.

The amendment concerns Article 6(2) of the product specification, which has been completely deleted.

7. **Inclusion of the mandatory geographical term 'Toscana' on the label**

Description:

The requirement to include the geographical term 'Toscana' on the label has been added and the relevant specifications for the use of the term and for the disposal of labels have been defined.

Reason:

The amendment has been introduced in order to make it possible to better identify the wines of the designation with the production area and to strengthen the designation, since 'Toscana' is one of the most important and appreciated terms in the world, but also to collectively promote Tuscan wines on foreign markets.

The amendment concerns Article 7 of the specification, inserting paragraph 7.2, and the section on 'Further conditions' of the single document.

8. **Updating of the link to the geographical environment**

Description:

The article on the link with the geographical environment has not been amended, but it was decided to rewrite the section 'Link with the geographical area' of the single document.

Reason:

Inclusion in the single document of the information already provided for in the product specification. The rewrite therefore concerns only the form of the text.

This amendment concerns the section 'Link with the geographical area' of the single document.

9. **Formal amendments**

Description:

Formal amendments have been made to correct the name of the Ministry and the address of the inspection body's headquarters.

Reason:

Corrections following the change in the name of the Ministry and the headquarters of the inspection body.

The amendment concerns Article 10(1) of the product specification.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

1. **Name of the product**

Vernaccia di San Gimignano

2. **Geographical indication type**

PDO – Protected Designation of Origin

3. **Categories of grapevine product**

1. Wine

3.1. *Combined Nomenclature code*

— 22 - BEVERAGES, SPIRITS AND VINEGAR

2204 - Wine of fresh grapes, including fortified wines; grape must other than that of heading 2009

4. **Description of the wine(s)**

Vernaccia di San Gimignano and Vernaccia di San Gimignano Riserva

CONCISE TEXTUAL DESCRIPTION

Colour: straw-yellow with hints of gold that become more pronounced with ageing.

Aroma: delicate, fine with fruity notes; with finishing and ageing, they develop mineral hints.

Flavour: dry, harmonious, full-bodied, sometimes with a distinctive almond after-taste.

Minimum total alcoholic strength by volume: 11,50 %; 12,50 % vol. for the 'Riserva' type.

Minimum sugar-free extract (g/l): 16,00.

Any analytical parameters not shown in the table below comply with the limits laid down in national and EU legislation.

General analytical characteristics

— Maximum total alcoholic strength (in % volume): —

— Minimum actual alcoholic strength (in % volume): —

— Minimum total acidity: 4,5 in grams per litre expressed as tartaric acid

— Maximum volatile acidity (in milliequivalents per litre): 18,00

— Maximum total sulphur dioxide (in milligrams per litre): —

5. **Wine-making practices**

5.1. *Specific oenological practices*

1. Vernaccia di San Gimignano – Vinification, ageing, finishing and bottling

Specific oenological practice

Vinification, ageing, finishing and bottling must be carried out within the territory of the municipality of San Gimignano.

The 'Riserva' type must be aged for at least 11 months from 1 January of the year following that in which the grapes were grown.

Before the wine enters into circulation, it must be finished in the bottle for three months.

5.2. *Maximum yields*

1. Vernaccia di San Gimignano and Vernaccia di San Gimignano Riserva

9 000 kilograms of grapes per hectare

2. Vernaccia di San Gimignano and Vernaccia di San Gimignano Riserva

67,50 hectolitres per hectare.

6. **Demarcated geographical area**

The grapes to be used to produce 'Vernaccia di San Gimignano' wine are obtained from vineyards located on hillsides in the municipality of San Gimignano in the province of Siena.

7. **Wine grape varieties**

Vernaccia di San Gimignano B. – Vernaccia

8. **Description of the link(s)**

8.1. *A) Details of the geographical area*

1) Natural factors relevant to the link

The production area falls entirely within the municipality of San Gimignano, located in the north-west of the province of Siena, in the heart of Tuscany, halfway between the Tyrrhenian coast and the Apennine ridge. It is a hilly area with altitudes ranging from 67 to 629 m above sea level; the soils are of Pliocene origin, dating back to 6,8 to 1,8 million years ago.

The land used to produce 'Vernaccia di San Gimignano' wine is formed on the Pliocene marine deposits and consists of yellow sands (tufo) and yellow and grey clay which, in turn, are often stratified on denser and deeper clays. In addition, it is distinguished by the presence of sand containing stones and clayey schists, a combination which creates favourable conditions for the penetration of plant roots. They generally contain organic matter, owing to repeated tillage and cultivation of crops over the centuries. The various combined proportions of sand, clay, organic matter and stones that characterise the individual soils are an important factor determining the properties of the grapes and wines, enhancing the wines' body, freshness and ageing capacity; these characteristics are common to and, at the same time, distinguish the individual Vernaccia wines.

The vineyards are at altitudes between 70 and 500 m above sea level, with varying gradients and exposures depending on the hillside where they are located.

The area has a sub-Mediterranean climate with fairly dry summers, rather cold winters and rainfall concentrated in two periods: late autumn-early winter and late winter-early spring.

Temperatures are typical of the climate of the area. Average annual rainfall is around 700 mm, distributed on average over 83 rainy days, and has a relative minimum in summer and a peak in autumn. The area is well ventilated throughout the year. Fog is rare.

2) Human factors relevant to the link

The human factors linked to the wine-growing area are of major importance, where the people have a long-established tradition of producing 'Vernaccia di San Gimignano' wines.

There is abundant archaeological evidence of wine-growing in the San Gimignano area dating back to Etruscan times. For centuries the production and sale of wine was the main agricultural and economic activity. There are historical records in the municipal tax regulations of the production and marketing of 'Vernaccia di San Gimignano' wine as far back as 1276.

The Vernaccia grape was introduced to the San Gimignano area during the 12th century. Interestingly, a study conducted by SERge-GEnomics, a spin-off company of the University of Siena commissioned by the San Gimignano Consorzio della Denominazione [designation consortium] to define the genome of Vernaccia di San Gimignano, revealed that today's productive vines are genetically very similar, due to the fact that all have a common root, with no contamination over the centuries from other vines from other regions: 'The data obtained have enabled us to identify clearly the genotype profile of the Vernaccia grape grown in the municipality of San Gimignano, confirming that it matches the grape variety stored in the official reference collections (CRA-VIT Conegliano Veneto) …'

Over the centuries, human labour has shaped the countryside, codified the various training and planting systems, updated wine-making techniques and introduced other white grape varieties to complement 'Vernaccia di San Gimignano', resulting in the present situation as described in the current product specification, the fruit of tradition and innovation, in the constant pursuit of better quality wines.

The specification allows for a lot of freedom in the use of traditional Tuscan training systems but rules out all high-trained systems because they are incompatible with a hillside environment in a sub-Mediterranean climate.

The wine-making practices are those traditionally built up in the area for making still white wines, suitably differentiated by type; 'Vernaccia di San Gimignano' is one of the very few Italian white wines also produced in the 'Riserva' type, which is more structured and whose production involves a period of finishing as indicated in Article 6(5).

8.2. *B) Information on the quality and characteristics of the product essentially or solely attributable to the geographical environment*

The Vernaccia di San Gimignano Registered and Guaranteed Designation of Origin refers to two types of white wine ('base' and 'riserva') which have very clear and particular analytical and organoleptic properties, as described in Article 6 of the specification, that enable them to be clearly identified in terms of their geographical location. In particular, they have a straw-yellow colour with hints of gold that become more accentuated with ageing. Their aroma is delicate, fine with fruity notes which, with finishing and ageing, can develop mineral hints. On the palate, all the wines have a dry, harmonious, full-bodied flavour, sometimes with a distinctive almond after-taste.

8.3. *C) Description of the causal interaction between the factors referred to in point A) and those referred to in point B)*

Vernaccia di San Gimignano is very much a native grape variety, extremely robust and potent, and one of the most ancient wines in Italy, with a history that is intertwined with that of the city and the land of San Gimignano: after being produced in large quantities in the medieval period, like the city, it experienced a long decline until the latter half of the 20th century, when it was revived and achieved renewed success.

It is said that the vine was introduced from Liguria (from Vernazza, hence the name) in about 1200 by a certain Vieri de'Bardi, but its origin is uncertain; others claim that the name derives from the Latin vernaculum, meaning vernacular, indicating typical products of a territory, which would explain why the name Vernaccia is also used for totally different vines, such as those of Oristano and Serrapetrona.

There are historical records of Vernaccia from the early 1200s: in 1276, the tax regulations of the municipality of San Gimignano refer to the imposition of a tax of three soldi for each load of Vernaccia sold outside the municipal territory, which reveals that its fame had already spread beyond the city walls, also confirmed by the many literary references to it from the 13th to the 16th century.

Perhaps the most famous is that of Dante Alighieri, who in the Divine Comedy sends Pope Martin IV to Purgatory to atone for his sins of gluttony, especially the eels of Bolsena cooked in Vernaccia: '… had keeping of the Church; he was of Tours, and purges by wan abstinence away Bolsena's eels and cups of muscadel [Vernaccia] …', Purgatory, Canto XXIV.

Michelangelo Buonarroti 'the Younger', describes what the wine was like then, namely a wine that 'kisses, licks, bites, punches, stings' — sweet, therefore, but tannic and tart, very different from the present-day wine, although from the scientific studies carried out on the Vernaccia DNA, it can be deduced that the profound difference derives from the growing and vinification techniques, rather than any difference in the Vernaccia grape variety.

An expert judgment on the quality of the wine comes from Sante Lacerio, a sommelier of Pope Paul III, who in a letter of 1541, after asking the municipality for 80 flasks of Vernaccia, regrets that in San Gimignano too much emphasis is placed on cultivating art and science, rather than cultivating Vernaccia, which '… is a perfect drink for a nobleman, and it is a great shame that the place does not make much of it …'

The crucial link between Vernaccia di San Gimignano and the area is therefore a matter of historical record, as is the fact that, for centuries, its production has been a primary economic item and that wine-growing has shaped the physical landscape; it is also true that this grape variety has not spread as much in other parts of Italy as it has in San Gimignano, although from medieval times merchants have tried to export the vine to other places, on account of its reputation, but without lasting success.

After its great success in the Medieval and Renaissance eras, almost all traces of Vernaccia were lost until after the Second World War, when the wine-growers of San Gimignano rediscovered the value of the ancient vine and started the process which, in 1966, led to the Registered Designation of Origin: another distinction of Vernaccia di San Gimignano is that it was the first wine in Italy to earn this title, followed by the Registered and Guaranteed Designation of Origin in 1993.

9. **Essential further conditions (packaging, labelling, other requirements)**

Obligation to include the geographical term 'Toscana' on the label

Legal framework:

EU legislation

Type of further condition:

Additional provisions relating to labelling

Description of the condition:

The geographical term 'Toscana' must appear on the label.

The labelling of the designation 'Vernaccia di San Gimignano' must always include the following wording in full and in the following order:

Vernaccia di San Gimignano

Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita (or the abbreviation DOCG)

Riserva (in the case of this type)

Toscana

The term 'Toscana' must appear in characters of the same font, style, spacing, shade and colorimetric intensity as those used for the words 'Vernaccia di San Gimignano'. In addition, the term 'Toscana' must appear in uniform capital and/or lower case letters, compared to those used for the words 'Vernaccia di San Gimignano', and on a uniform background for the entire sequence of indications listed in the previous paragraph, and the letters must not be larger than 2/3 of the size used for the words 'Vernaccia di San Gimignano'.

The obligation referred to in this paragraph is without prejudice to the disposal of labels for packaging batches of products resulting from the 2024 and previous harvests, which do not bear the term 'Toscana', held by the companies concerned on the date of entry into force of the Decree approving the amendment to this specification, which may be used until stocks are exhausted.

Link to the product specification

https://www.politicheagricole.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/22157