C/2025/4218

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Publication of an application for registration of a geographical indication pursuant to Article 15(4) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council

(C/2025/4218)

Within three months from the date of this publication, the authorities of a Member State or of a third country, or a natural or legal person having a legitimate interest and established or resident in a third country, may lodge, in accordance with Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council [1] an opposition with the Commission.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea'

EU No: PGI-RO-03263

Date of submission: 11 June 2024

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

'Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea'

2. **Member State or third country**

Romania

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

3.1. *Combined Nomenclature Code*

— 16 – PREPARATIONS OF MEAT, OF FISH, OF CRUSTACEANS, MOLLUSCS, OR OTHER AQUATIC INVERTEBRATES, OR OF INSECTS

1601 – Sausages and similar products, of meat, meat offal, blood or insects; food preparations based on these products

1601 00 91 – Sausages, dry or for spreading, uncooked

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

'Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea' PGI are pork sausages smoked with beech wood, of irregular cylindrical shape, and cased in a natural casing (pork gut). The sausages are made up of 80 % meat and 20 % fat chopped (shredded) with a cleaver, resulting in relatively large cubes/pieces of meat and fat of up to 12 mm.

The taste and tenderness obtained from salting/curing the meat with Ocnele Mari salt are complemented by the flavour of the spices and the specific smoky taste from the use of beech wood, which distinguishes 'Cârnati din topor din Vâlcea' from other types of smoked sausages, in terms of both the method of preparation and the product's characteristics.

[1] Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on geographical indications for wine, spirit drinks and agricultural products, as well as traditional specialities guaranteed and optional quality terms for agricultural products, amending Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013, (EU) 2019/787 and (EU) 2019/1753 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 (OJ L, 2024/1143, 23.4.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1143/oj).

The sausages have the following characteristics:

Organoleptic

External appearance: 'Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea' PGI sausages are cylindrical in shape, ranging from 24 mm to 26 mm in diameter, with a slightly uneven surface, 30 to 35 cm long and weighing between 100 and 150 grams. The sausages are produced in strings of up to 1 m in length, weighing approximately 1 kg.

Texture: semi-hard due to pieces of meat and softer/semi-elastic in places where there are pieces of fat.

Appearance when cut/sliced: the coarse pork and fat filling give the slice a mosaic and symmetrical appearance, with visible particles from the crushed pepper and thyme scattered over the entire surface.

The product does not have any rendered fat lumps under the casing or lumps of seasoning or garlic.

Colour: on the outside, the casing ranges from amber to light brown or copper and appears clean and not sticky, with occasional patches of white yeasts. When cut, the pieces of pork, which range from red to dark red, along with the yellowish white colour of the fat, create a mosaic pattern.

Taste and aroma: a pleasant smoky, spicy smell, and a slightly spicy taste of garlic and pepper, moderately salty, with a fine smoky tinge.

Physicochemical characteristics

Parameters to be verified	Permissible values
Moisture (%)	maximum 62
Fat (%)	maximum 27
Protein (%)	minimum 16
Salt (%)	maximum 2,5

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

The raw materials used to make Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea PGI are pieces of pigmeat from cutting, preferably primal cuts of marbled meat or alternating layers of meat and fat with a percentage of meat/fat of approximately 80/20 and natural pork casings (pork gut). The use of artificial casings is not permitted.

Ingredients: Salt (rock salt for the food industry extracted from the Ocnele Mari salt mine), thyme (dried and ground leaves), garlic (fresh), freshly ground black pepper.

No smoke flavouring is used, as smoking is done exclusively in the classic beech wood smoker.

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

The manufacturing process, including the receipt of raw materials, ingredients and processing aids, cutting of carcasses and parts, chopping with a cleaver, dry salting, preparation of the paste, filling of casings, drying and cold smoking, and hot smoking of sausages using hardwood must take place in the defined geographical area.

3.5. *Specific rules on slicing, scraping, packaging, etc. of the product to which the registered name refers*

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

The label contains the words 'Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea PGI' and the EU logo.

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

The defined geographical area comprises the following administrative territorial units: Mihăești, Ocnele Mari, Frâncești, Popești, Roești, Lăpușata, and Roșiile in Vâlcea County.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

The application to register the name Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea PGI is based on the reputation and distinctive characteristics of the product, such as the use of salt from the Ocnele Mari salt mine to cure the meat, and the double hardwood-smoking of the sausages.

The history of sausage production is closely linked to the development of the households specific to the demarcated area, the agricultural areas and the traditions of preparing pork products using natural resources.

These sausages are different to other products in the same category due to their colour, flavour and aroma, and the balance of taste is ensured by the mixture of the spices used (rock salt from Ocnele Mari, thyme, pepper, garlic) and double smoking with hardwood.

The organoleptic characteristics of 'Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea' PGI sausages are due to the approximately 80:20 ratio of meat to fat, manually chopping the meat using a cleaver, ageing the meat by dry salting, cold smoking for curing and hot smoking to give a fine smoky taste to the sausages.

The intensity of the taste is the result of the combination of macro-elements (Ca, Mg, Na, K) and micro-elements (Fe, Cu, Zn, Mn, Co) from the salt used from Ocnele Mari and the method of ageing the pieces cut with a cleaver, thus promoting the action of endogenous proteolytic enzymes.

The forests of Vâlcea County support an important economic branch of the county, silviculture and forestry, which makes a major contribution to the county's economy. Beech wood is abundant in Vâlcea County's forests and is available to local residents for home use and therefore for smoking meat products.

These elements have helped to improve the skills of the human factors from generation to generation and thus the characteristics of Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea.

In the demarcated geographical area, the production of smoked hardwood meat products from 'rîmîtorii de Crîciun' (an old name for pigs) preserves the ancient crafts/traditions of the demarcated area mentioned in section 4.

From a historical perspective, another distinguishing characteristic of the way the sausages are prepared is the fact that the meat is chopped manually using a cleaver; a testimony to this is the description in the book 'Despre Bucate și rânduială' ['Dishes and Traditions'], Editura Scripta, 2009, under the coordination of Dr Nicolae Rauș, on page 248: '(…) The first, and those which start the meals, are the salted, stewed and smoked meats… and then the smoked sausages. The meat has to be carefully selected, cleaned of gristle and chopped with a "satâr" (the local name for a cleaver), then raw pork fat is mixed, cut finely, and minced with salt, (…), and crushed garlic cloves (…)'.

According to the testimonies of locals in the geographical area: 'For Christmas, New Year or Epiphany we cut up the pig and prepare the sausages like this: we choose the leg meat and, if it is not fatty enough, we add a little more raw pork fat and then chop it with an axe or the special cleaver for chopping meat. (…) Then we take the guts, clean them with a fat trimming knife, rinse them with water and stuff them, and put them on a wooden tray in a well-aired place to dry. We leave them there for a day, and then we smoke them with beech wood (…)', in the words of Elena Olaru, who is 88 years old and from the municipality of Roșiile, County Vâlcea, in statements published on 9 February 2024 on the website of the municipality of Roșiile, which is part of the geographical area (https://www.facebook.com/ComunaRosiile/posts/768499045314218).

Evidence of the product's reputation can invariably be found in a large number of specialised scientific or ethnographic publications (speciality articles, doctoral theses), monographs by the communities in the geographical area, press articles, and television interviews. Of particular interest is the doctoral thesis 'Studiul privind influența frăgezirii mecanice asupra calității unor produse tradiționale din carne de porc' ['Study on the influence of mechanical tenderisation on the quality of traditional pigmeat products'], defended in 2015 at the University of Craiova, Faculty of Mechanical Studies – Doctoral School of Engineering, under the coordination of Mircea Bădescu, which analysed the effects of mechanical tenderisation of pigmeat and, consequently, the influence and specific characteristics that this raw material confers on the pigmeat preparations in which it is used.

After 1989, in the municipality of Mihăești, Vâlcea County, small businesses adopted the Vâlcea sausage recipe, preserving the local tradition in the geographical area, by producing several preparations with local specificity.

There are many references to the quality of the product and the raw materials used to make it, as well as the expertise of the artisan pork butchers who, from the moment they slice the raw material until the product is finished, leave an imprint steeped in tradition and history, contributing to the growing renown of Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea PGI.

The newspaper *Arena Vâlcenă* on 28 January 2024 published an article entitled 'Cârnații din topor de la Vâlcea în prim plan la expoziția de la Berlin' ['Cârnați din topor de la Vâlcea in the spotlight at the Berlin exhibition' (https://arenavalceana.ro/carnatii-din-topor-de-la-valcea-in-prim-plan-la-expozitia-de-la-berlin/); the digital newspaper profit.ro published an article in the Agrobusiness section on 19 January 2024 entitled 'Ministerul Agriculturii va promova produse românești tradiționale la Berlin. Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea, carne afumată la garniță din Vâlcea, brânjă în coajă de brad de Bran' ['The Ministry of Agriculture will promote traditional Romanian products in Berlin. Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea, smoked meat fried in lard from Vâlcea, cheese wrapped in fir bark from Bran'] (link: https://www.profit.ro/povesti-cu-profit/agribusiness/ministerul-agriculturii-va-promova-produse-romanesti-traditionale-la-berlin-carnati-din-topor-din-valcea-carne-afumata-la-garnita-din-valcea-branza-in-coaja-de-brad-de-bran-21466076); Revista Fermierului on 24 January 2024 published an article entitled 'Cârnații din topor din Vâlcea cuceresc lumea' ['Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea conquer the world'] (link: https://www.revistafermierului.ro/din-revista/satul-romanesc/item/6016-carnatii-din-topor-din-valcea-cuceresc-lumea.html).

The reputation and renown of Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea PGI sausages are also highlighted in the local publication *Râmnicu Vâlcea Week* from 13 January 2020 (https://www.ramnicuvalceaweek.ro/o-fabricuta-din-valcea-exporta-carne-la-garnita-caltabosi-carnati-din-topor-in-7-state-europene/), in which the writer describes the tradition of preparing pigmeat specific to the demarcated area. 'They are called "cârnați din topor" because we cut the meat manually with a cleaver, in pieces of 2 to 3 centimetres, like our grandparents and great-grandparents used to. The meat cleaver is known in the geographical area as a "topor". Other local names are also used, like "toporișcă", "satâr" or "bardă" in promoting the name "Cârnați din topor ca altădată" for over two decades. The condiments we use are natural: salt, pepper and thyme. It is a very old recipe going back almost a hundred years', said Mihaela Antonie.

In her project "Călătorie prin țara mea întoarcerea la tradiții și obiceiuri străvechi" ["Travelling through my country discovering ancient traditions and customs'], chef Maria Spinciu presented the Vâlcea gastronomic tradition in celebration of Romania's National Day on 1 December (https://www.facebook.com/share/p/3ba3i7aBHAZoroXh/, 1 February 2024). She said that, when prepared with great effort, this sausage chopped with a cleaver has taste properties unmatched by any other range of traditional products: "Cârnați din topor' are the oldest pork preparation and those who manage to preserve the recipe for this product deserve our deep respect. Today I have prepared traditional, festive Romanian food, including meat products from days gone by. (…) 'Cârnați din topor' certainly have a taste that takes us back to our childhood, to the time of our grandparents and to a healthy environment.'

In the *Revista Fermierului* of 24 January 2024 (https://www.revistafermierului.ro/din-revista/satul-romanesc/item/6016-carnatii-din-topor-din-valcea-cuceresc-lumea.html), the article entitled 'Cârnații din topor din Vâlcea cuceresc lumea' ['Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea conquer the world'], tells the story of the famous Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea: 'The meat for cârnați din topor is very carefully selected, and of very good quality.

The certified traditional preparation 'Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea' is obtained exclusively from pork, cut with a knife into pieces and sprinkled with natural spices: fresh garlic, dried thyme, pepper and salt. It is left to tenderise, so the spices can combine and perfect the taste and flavour of the meat. This meat is then stuffed into the natural casings (pork guts), left to dry and slowly smoked (with beech wood) until the sausages acquire a natural, coppery colour.

You may be wondering why these sausages are called 'din topor'. A century ago, there were no cutting tools like today, and the 'topor' in the Vâlcea area was traditionally used as a tool for a variety of activities. For example, housewives selected their meat and chopped it with a 'topor."

The promotion of Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea PGI through dynamic, interactive platforms, along with the strategic integration of media and social media in the information campaigns of members of the applicant group, have helped to create a direct interaction with the consumer, providing opportunities for dialogue and feedback, which has increased the visibility and demand for the product both in the domestic and export markets.

Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea PGI is one of the most common meat preparations in the demarcated geographical area and is known to consumers throughout the country, as it features on the menus of famous restaurants such as Hanu" lui Manuc, Casa Elena Lupescu, Casa Oprea Soare and Hanu' Berarilor. At Hanu' lui Manuc, a supplier of the Royal House of Romania, the product is included in the menu under the name 'cârnați din topor la jar' [sausages smoked over the embers] or 'cârnați din topor din Vâlcea'.

The presence of Cârnați din topor din Vâlcea PGI sausages at national and international fairs (Grune Woche in Berlin, Anuga in Cologne, SIAL Paris) has always been appreciated by customers, authorities and the press, both for its taste, aroma, quality and the story behind the product.

Reference to publication of the product specification

https://madr.ro/docs/ind-alimentara/2025/caiete-de-sarcini-2024/CAIET-DE-SARCINI-CARNATI-DIN-TOPOR-DIN-VALCEA-rev1.pdf