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

(C/2024/1647)

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 three months from the date of this publication.

PRODUCT SPECIFICATION OF A TRADITIONAL SPECIALITY GUARANTEED

'Vrbovečka pera'

EU No: TSG-HR-02497 -12.5.2023

Member State or Third Country: Republic of Croatia

1. **Name(s) to be registered**

'Vrbovečka pera'

2. **Type of product [as in Annex XI]**

Class 2.27. Bread, pastry, cakes, confectionery, biscuits and other baker's wares

3. **Grounds for registration**

3.1. *Whether the product*

☐ results from a mode of production, processing or composition corresponding to traditional practice for that product or foodstuff

☒ is produced from raw materials or ingredients that are those traditionally used.

The product 'Vrbovečka pera' is a traditional product, since it would have been made in family homes, in bread ovens, from ingredients produced at home and used as staple foods as such or for the preparation of more complex dishes. These ingredients would have been, first and foremost, flour obtained from home-grown and milled wheat and maize for the dough, followed by cottage cheese and cream prepared in a traditional way, to use up any milk not consumed fresh, as well as eggs from chickens and other poultry reared in farmyards, fat from farmed animals, fresh milk, and some salt, sugar and baker's yeast. All these ingredients would traditionally have been found in any farmhouse. The preparation skills have been passed down by word of mouth through generations of housewives to the present day.

The following traditional ingredients/raw materials are used to prepare 'Vrbovečka pera':

Cottage cheese made from cow's milk – obtained using the traditional fermentation method, i.e. by natural, two-day acidification of milk without the addition of rennet or other additives

Sour cream – produced by traditional means, i.e. by skimming sour milk, without pasteurisation or other treatment

Wheat flour – type 400-500, fine

Cornmeal

Baker's yeast – fresh

Milk – fresh, sterilised or pasteurised

Sugar – granulated

Salt – table salt

Eggs – from controlled farming

([1]) OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

3.2. *Whether the name*

☒ has been traditionally used to refer to the specific product

☐ identifies the traditional character or specific character of the product

The name *pera* occurs in parts of north-western Croatia (Zagorje, Prigorje) and denotes a product made from dough onto which a filling made of cheese and cream, with or without additional ingredients, is spread, before it is placed in a bread oven for baking. 'Vrbovečka pera' is distinctive in that it is made from yeast dough, whereas similar products, such as *perica*, *loparek* or *tenka gibanica*, are made from a thin dough. 'Vrbovečka pera' has a characteristic shape: it is invariably round, with a slightly raised edge that is folded somewhat over the filling. The filling invariably consists of cheese, cream, eggs, a spoonful of cornmeal or maize flour (which may be replaced by semolina or rice) and a little salt. No other ingredients are allowed. Obviously, for the sweet variant, a spoonful of sugar is added to the filling. A cookbook of traditional Croatian dishes produced by one of the region's most famous chefs, Stevo Karapandža, includes a recipe for 'Vrbovečka pera' (S. Karapandža, Hrvatska kuharica [Croatian Cookbook], 1986)

4. **Description**

4.1. *Description of the product to which the name under point 1 applies, including its main physical, chemical, microbiological or organoleptic characteristics showing the product's specific character (Article 7(2) of this Regulation)*

'Vrbovečka pera' comes under the category of bakery products. It is best described as a round savoury or sweet pie with a recipe and shape of its own and a specific appearance that most resembles a cheese pizza. The base and raised edge are made from a yeast dough produced from soft flour, fresh yeast, milk and salt, while the inside contains a filling composed of cottage cheese from cow's milk, cream and eggs. There is also a sweet variant that is permitted, where a spoonful of sugar is added to the filling. The sweet variant would have been prepared mainly for children and elderly people.

Its specific character is determined by the following organoleptic properties:

Appearance – 'Vrbovečka pera' is round in shape, with a diameter of around 35 cm and a thickness of around 2 cm in the middle and up to 3 cm around the edges. When sliced, the pastry and the filling should have a uniform thickness, and the filling should not separate from the pastry. The filling is golden yellow in colour, shiny, with characteristic round brown spots formed by the browned fat.

Aroma – Typical of cottage cheese and cream and freshly baked yeast dough.

Taste – 'Vrbovečka pera' has a slightly salty and slightly sour taste, while the sweet variant has a slightly sweet and slightly sour taste; the pastry and the filling complement each other and form a harmonious whole. No single taste should prevail; all tastes and aromas should form a harmonious whole.

Texture – The pastry must be baked through, fine-textured and soft to the bite.

4.2. *Description of the production method of the product to which the name under point 1 applies that the producers must follow including, where appropriate, the nature and characteristics of the raw materials or ingredients used, and the method by which the product is prepared (Article 7(2) of this Regulation)*

Ingredients required:

for the dough	
fine flour	300 g
milk	0,2 l
yeast	16 g
sugar	8 g
lard	16 g
salt	8 g

for the filling	
cottage cheese	400 g
sour cream	140 g
Salt	7 g
Cornmeal	12 g
Eggs	1 egg (+ the white of 1 egg)
*sugar	16 g
for the topping	
sour cream	50 g
eggs	1 egg (yolk)

* for the sweet variant only

* deviations of ± 5 g are allowed from the quantities indicated.

Preparation of the fermentation mixture

Sugar, fresh yeast and one spoonful of fine flour from the quantity weighed are mixed together and placed in preheated milk to ferment in a warm place.

Preparation of the dough

Fine flour, salt, lard and a fermented yeast mixture are mixed together and left to rise in a warm place for 5–15 minutes, until the dough doubles in volume.

Preparation of the filling

In a separate container, the cheese, cream, eggs (and the white of the egg from the topping), salt and cornmeal (or semolina or rice) are mixed to form a uniform filling. The coarser lumps of cheese are left in the mixture.

Preparation of the topping

In a separate container, the egg yolk and cream are mixed to form a uniform topping.

Preparation for baking

The dough is kneaded and rolled out to a thickness of around 1 cm and a diameter of around 45 cm. The edges of the dough (around 4-5 cm) are flattened with the fingers to around half of the thickness of the dough in the middle. The filling is placed in a uniform layer over the surface of the dough as far as the tapered edge. The edge is then folded over the filling so that there are no creases. The topping is poured unevenly over the filling. 'Vrbovečka pera' is ready for baking.

Baking

In olden days, 'Vrbovečka pera' was baked in a bread oven. Nowadays, baking in a preheated household oven or convection oven at 180–200 °C is also allowed. 'Vrbovečka pera' is done when the filling takes on the typical appearance described in point 4.1 of this specification.

4.3. *Description of the key elements establishing the product's traditional character (Article 7(2) of this Regulation)*

'Vrbovečka pera' has a long tradition of production, its recipe having been passed down from generation to generation.

While there are few written records of 'Vrbovečka pera', its story has been passed down by word of mouth by the women preparing traditional dishes at a culinary festival entitled *Kaj su jeli naši stari* [What our ancestors ate]. This event has been held in Vrbovec since the early 1980s and has helped preserve the recipe for 'Vrbovečka pera'. The event was first announced in the newsletter *Komuna* in 1981, under an article entitled *Kaj su jeli naši stari* [What our ancestors ate], which stated that, *'keen to preserve the tradition of preparing original dishes from olden times, Vrbovec will host*

a culinary festival for the first time on 26 September [...] The aim is to present and preserve the originality of these dishes, which will be served in their original tableware. The dishes on offer will include the famous "pera", "upside-down" tarts and easy-to-prepare soups, to name a few.' (*Komuna*, newsletter article, 1981). The purpose of the event is to revive the tradition of preparing original products from olden times from the Vrbovec region. At the first event, held in Vrbovec in 1981, 'Vrbovečka pera' was made the traditional way, using traditional ingredients. It was prepared by housewives from a local association of retired women, with the aim of presenting it as a distinct, original speciality that is well-known and beloved in the region.

Over the past few decades, several recipes for *pera* have been gathered and recorded and published in cookbooks. The most sought after and best-selling recipe has been for 'Vrbovečka pera'. For example, in 1997 the author Zlatan Nadvornik published several recipes for *pera* in a cookbook entitled *Jela vrbovečkog kraja* [The food of the Vrbovec region]. The most famous one is the traditional recipe for 'Vrbovečka pera', which is used to this day (Z. Nadvornik, *Jela vrbovečkog kraja*, cookbook, 1997). Similarly, the eminent Croatian chef Stevo Karapandža published a recipe for 'Vrbovečka pera' in his book *Hrvatska kuharica* [Croatian Cookbook] (S. Karapandža, *Hrvatska kuharica*, 1986). The specificity of 'Vrbovečka pera' is that it is made from a yeast dough and that the filling is made exclusively from traditional ingredients: cheese, cream, eggs, salt, with the addition of flour or meal, with no other raw materials in the mixture. The shape of 'Vrbovečka pera' has always been round, like traditional bread and the *lopata*, or baker's peel, a traditional tool used to place the product into a bread oven for baking.

The key element that makes this product traditional is the use of cottage cheese made from cow's milk and cream, which are produced the traditional way in small cheese dairies. Cottage cheese is obtained using the traditional fermentation method – by natural, two-day acidification of the milk without the addition of rennet or other means. With such naturally acidified milk, after 2 days, when the milk takes on a firmer structure, the cream that has risen to the surface is skimmed off. The skimmed sour milk is gently heated and stirred, to produce cottage cheese, which is left in a colander to drain. 'Vrbovečka pera' may be prepared only from cottage cheese made from cow's milk produced using this traditional method – without additional methods of protection such as pasteurisation or other means of extending shelf life. Similarly, only cream produced the traditional way – by skimming sour milk, without additional methods of protection such as pasteurisation or other means of extending shelf life – is permitted.