

PRODUCT SPECIFICATION

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006 on protected geographical indications and protected designations of origin

“ORKNEY ISLAND CHEDDAR”

EC No:

PDO () PGI (✓)

This document sets out the product specification for information purposes.

1 RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT IN THE MEMBER STATE

Food and Policy Unit

Area 7e, 9 Milbank

c/o Nobel House

17 Smith Square

London

SW1P 3JR

United Kingdom

Tel: +44207 238 6075

Fax: +44207 238 5728

Email: protectedfoodnames@defra.gsi.gov.uk

2 GROUP

Name: Orkney Cheese Company Limited

Address: Crowness Road

Hatston Industrial Estate

Kirkwall

Orkney

KW15 1RG

Tel.: 01856 872824

Fax: 01856 872402

E-mail: tim@orkneycheese.com

Composition: Producers/processors (1) Other (20 milk producers)

The applicant company is the only company producing “Orkney Island Cheddar” in the defined area. However, the applicant company includes 20 dairy farmers from within the geographical area. The applicant recognises

that any producer in the defined area has the right to produce the product in accordance with the specifications and the obligations imposed by the regulatory framework.

3 TYPE OF PRODUCT: CHEESE – CLASS 1.3

4 SPECIFICATION

4.1 Name: “Orkney Island Cheddar”

4.2 Description: Orkney Island Cheddar is produced with locally sourced milk from within the defined geographical area. It has moderate levels of sharp acid notes whilst remaining fairly rounded with savoury and nutty notes. The aroma is clean and characteristic of cheddar with a firm but malleable texture which is smooth and closed. Orkney Island Cheddar cheese is typically matured for 10 to 18 months giving a variety of medium, mature and extra mature flavour profiles.

The cheeses are typically sold in three age profiles:

- Medium Mature 6-12 months which has a smooth texture with slight savoury flavour.
- Mature 12-15 months which has a firm smooth texture with slightly sharp savoury flavour.

Extra Mature 15–18 months firm slightly brittle texture with sharp savoury notes and lactate crystal.

The cheese is produced in a 20kg block shape which is then cut into varying shapes and sizes up to 20kg after maturation. The cheeses are made in either white or coloured types which will have a bright even colour throughout the body of the cheese. The coloured cheese differing from the white by having a vegetable colour pigment added after pasteurisation.

The chemical standards of the cheese are:

- Moisture 33-36%
- Fat 33-36%
- Fat in dry matter 50-52%
- Salt 1.6-2.1%
- PH 5.1-5.4 at make

The microbiological limits for the cheese are:

- Listeria Monocytogenes absent in 25g
- Staphylococcal enterotoxins absent in 25g
- Salmonella absent in 25g.

4.3 Geographical area: Orkney Islands, North of Scotland, with the town of Kirkwall at its centre.

4.4 Proof of origin: The fresh raw milk is produced on farms defined as within the geographical area. The milk is uplifted by bulk tankers on a daily basis with farm, volume and temperature information recorded. Samples are retained for reference on a daily basis with one sample a week being sent to a third party laboratory for quality testing which along with the volume collected form the basis of the payment and traceability systems.

All milk collected is subject to quality testing before being accepted with tanker load details and storage silo being used recorded.

To ensure safety, quality and traceability of all ingredients and packaging used during the production process comprehensive records are kept from milk collection through to cheese despatch, these include milk reception record sheet, cheese processing record sheet, laboratory/grading and daily silo records. As milk is collected on liquid bulk tankers it is only possible to trace the raw milk to individual day's delivery to the creamery for production purposes as it is possible to have 2-3 days milk from all farms in the same vat of cheese. The system of having a unique label allows traceability back to an individual vat and where a full pallet of cheese is sold a record of the individual customer.

4.5 Method of production:

Orkney Island Cheddar is made from raw milk which has been produced within the defined geographical area. The milk is produced from dairy cattle on a fresh grass and silage based production. The cattle are on grass for 6 months and housed for the remainder of the year. The diet is supplemented by home grown barley, turnips and brewers grains sourced from a local distillery. There is also non-gm Soya (protein supplement), sugar beet (energy supplement) and mineral supplement sourced from outwith the area to complete the rations. This feeding regime allows the cattle to produce well balanced milk in terms of fat, protein and lactose. The milk is delivered to the creamery on a daily basis. The cheese milk is pasteurized and at this stage is also standardized by removing cream to maintain a given butterfat to protein ratio with a centrifugal separator. The process of standardizing the milk will maintain a consistence in the firmness of the body of the cheese, which would otherwise vary over the course of the year.

The milk is then pumped to the cheese vat where a lactic acid forming culture (*Lactococcus lactis* subsp. *cremoris/lactis* and *Streptococcus salivarius* subsp. *thermophilus*) is added which develops acid and flavour in the cheese. If the cheese is to be coloured variety, annatto is mixed in at this stage (annatto is a pigment which is extracted from the seed of the annatto tree). The milk is stirred continuously during this period for 60 minutes at 31°C until the rennet is added and the milk is allowed to coagulate into a solid junket which the cheesemaker checks by hand and takes approximately 25 minutes. The junket is cut very slowly at first by rotating machine blades to split the curds and whey. The curd particles are then firmed up by raising the temperature in the vat up to 40°C in 40 – 45 minutes.

The next stage is for the curds and whey to be drained onto an open finishing table where the whey is drained off and the curds are continuously stirred up until the point at which salting is carried out between 3hrs 15 mins and 3hrs 25 mins after renneting. The process of continuously stirring the curd from pitching of the vat until salting is the dry stirring technique. The exact point at which salting is carried out is determined by the skill of the cheese maker when a acidic titration of around 0.28 is reached. The dry salted curds are then drawn by vacuum to a block forming tower where the curds bind together before being ejected by the machine in the form of a 20kg block.

The cheeses then will be vacuum sealed in bags and given a unique label for full traceability before wooden slats are strapped to the cheese by hand to maintain the block shape while maturing takes place. The cheeses are matured for between 6-18 months at 8-10°C before they are cut into varying pack sizes up to 20kg.

The cheeses are then graded at 12 weeks of age by an independent grader and only cheese that fall into the First Grade category are called Orkney Island Cheddar.

First Grade Definition:

General requirements are that all cheese are hard pressed, made from cows milk and containing a minimum of 48% of butterfat in the moisture free substance.

- Flavour is clean and milk free from any trace of bitterness or any other taint.
- Colour is even and uniform throughout with no apparent mottling. White: Not chalky. Coloured: Bright even colour throughout.
- Body is firm, smooth and silky.
- Texture is closed with absence of gas holes.
- Finish and appearance is showing square sides with tight bag and no signs of blowing or mould growth.

4.6 Link:

Orkney cheese is made using local milk from the Orkney Isles, following a traditional recipe and process. The production of Orkney Island Cheddar is a marrying of the craftsmanship of the cheese maker and the use of the local Orkney Island milk.

Geographical area

The designated geographical area is typically on low undulating farmland which has deep fertile topsoil which is the result of the farming of the land over the last 5000 years. The area is renowned for its world heritage site status for Neolithic monuments and for large areas having been classed as Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) or Sites of Special Scientific Interests (SSSI). With the proximity of the Gulf Stream it has resulted in a temperate climate and also a rich source of iodine and sulphur in the soil which combined with the constant daylight around mid summer due to the northern

latitude, produces a rich lush pasture for the predominately Holstein/Friesian and Ayrshire dairy cattle. This combination of conditions has led to a unique source of high quality milk for cheese making which is ring fenced by its physical geographical area.

Skill of cheese maker

The cheese maker, is in control of the process by monitoring the acidic development and when at correct levels carries out pitching from the vat, running whey and by his labour when working the dry curd on the table. The salting of the curd requires a great amount of skill as the curd needs to be at the correct consistency and acidity.

The salt is applied by hand by a technique that is akin to broadcast sowing of seed that the early crofters would have used in the fields of Orkney for generations before. It is essential this is skilfully done as the correct amount of salt must be applied and spread evenly through the curd. In addition the skill of the cheese maker monitoring the production of the cheese is essential to ensure it remains at the correct consistency and acidity throughout the process. It is through many years of experience that the cheese maker produces a cheese that has the correct texture and flavour. This requires skill and experience to ensure consistent production of a high quality cheese that must meet the First Grade Definition.

Dry Stir Technique

Orkney Islands Cheddar differs from other traditional cheddars due to the unique dry stir technique. This method of production was developed in 1984 and is still used today having been a real synergy of ideas of the management who were striving to produce cheddar efficiently with a short process time but also having a point of difference over traditional cheddar cheeses. It created a firm dense bodied cheese and by using milk that has been standardized gives the cheese a consistent body and texture over the whole year with a rounded mellow flavour.

Dry stirring is an adaptation of the traditional cheddar recipe which is carried out after the vat has been pitched onto the finishing table and is achieved by not allowing the curd to bond together after the whey has been run. It is continuously stirred up and to the point salt is added and allowed to mellow. The benchmark is for salting to be carried out between 3hrs 15 minutes and 3hrs 25minutes after renneting and have a acidic titration of 0.28 This gives the cheese a closed texture and when the salting is skilfully carried out by hand it is being applied to a smaller curd particle which gives a more consistent distribution than with a traditional cheddar make. The curd is then allowed to cheddar together in the blockforming towers, after which it is bagged and matured in bound wooden slats.

Reputation

The cheese making industry in Orkney goes back hundreds of years with the crofting culture whereby to supplement a meagre income the crofters wife

would sell surplus handmade cheeses. There would of also have been some cheeses that would be stored in an oatmeal girdel for supplementing the diet in the long winter months.

The original creamery was set up in Kirkwall in 1946 as a consequence of the milk supply having increased during the Second World War to feed the 60,000 service personnel based on the islands. A hard cheese in traditional clothed cylinders, blocks and wheels were made until due to increased milk production a switch to more modern method of production and a cheddar recipe was made with a new creamery in 1958. This cheddar recipe was then modified with a "dry stir technique" being carried out in 1984 after a period of trialling this innovative variation to the traditional cheddar recipe.

The cheese is now produced using modern facilities which replicate the production process of the previous creamery and maintain its quality, which is reinforced by its continued success at winning prizes at major competitions at Nantwich International Show (Gold Mild White 2009), Royal Highland Show (Gold and Best Scottish Exhibit 2009), The Bath and West Show (1st Mild White 2007), British Cheese Awards (Gold Mild White 2006) and Great Yorkshire Cheese And Dairy Show (1st mild White 2010).

The cheese has featured on the menu at the prestigious Langham Hotel in London and celebrity chef Nick Nairn quoted in 2009 "The quality of Orkney Cheddar is down to the islands unique climate and to the dry stir method. It's particularly good for cooking, unlike some cheddar, due to its production method which results in less oil being released when melting. Using Orkney cheddar to cook helps create a creamier, more flavoursome dish".

4.7 Inspection body:

Name: Orkney Islands Council Trading Standards

Address: Council Offices

School Place

Kirkwall

Orkney

KW15 1NY

Tel.: 01856873535

Fax: 01856886450

E-mail: trading.standards@orkney.gov.uk

4.8 Labelling: