

Specification of the Protected Geographical Indication Sulguni

**NUMBER OF REGISTRATION: 10**

**DATE OF REGISTRATION: 24/01/2012**

**HOLDER – MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE OF GEORGIA**

**PRODUCT NAME FOR WHICH THE REGISTRATION OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION IS REQUESTED: Class 29 – Cheeses**

**I. The name of the Geographical Indication**

სულგუნი

English translation: Sulguni

Cyrillic: Сулгуни or СУЛГУНИ

**II. Description of the product**

Sulguni cheese is produced from cow, buffalo or goat milk or a mix of thereof; Sulguni is stretched-curd cheese (better known under “pasta filata” type), that is produced from cow, buffalo or goat milk or a mix of thereof. It can be fresh, dried, aged, smoked. Sulguni can be mixed with other ingredients (e.g. mint, tarragon, savoury and other herbs or spices, also, Adjika, honey, wine and chacha, hazelnut, walnut, almond).

**Specific organoleptic characteristics**

Shape

Usually, Sulguni presented to consumers has the form of a low cylinder, without crust, with a mass of 0.25-2.2 kg, a diameter of 7-30 cm and a height of 2-7 cm.

Sulguni may also be presented to consumers sliced or into various forms, among them:

- Spherical shape with a knot on the top
- Braids
- Strings,
- Sticks,

- Plates,
- Any other shape (animal, bird, etc.).

#### Colour:

Inside and outside colour of Sulguni made from cow milk has a uniform colour from ivory to light yellow.

Inside and outside colour of Sulguni made from buffalo milk is white to ivory colour.

Outside colour of smoked Sulguni is golden-brown, while the inside has a yellowish colour.

If ingredients such as herbs, wine are used during making and/or aging of Sulguni, it may take the colour characteristic to these ingredients.

#### Texture:

Sulguni has dense and elastic mass and is layered. Sulguni has the layers that are easily detachable. The surface of Sulguni is smooth, it should not be granular. Sulguni should not provide in mouth an unctuous feeling. Sulguni is free of holes, but interstices between layers are admitted.

Fresh Sulguni must be juicy and layers easily detachable. Liquid between layers should be dripping when the cheese is cut in half.

#### Smell:

Sulguni has an appetizing smell of fresh milk and creamy aromas.

The smell of smoked Sulguni is characterised by the smell of smoke, without fully covering the aromas encountered in the non-smoked Sulguni.

In case of adding ingredients, Sulguni takes the smell of the ingredient.

#### Taste:

The taste of Sulguni is pure, milky/creamy, typical for the cultured milk product. It should be moderately salty. It shall not have the taste of rennet or other uncharacteristic taste.

Smoked Sulguni is moderately but slightly saltier than the non-smoked Sulguni, with aroma of the smoked product. In case of adding ingredients, Sulguni also takes the taste of the ingredient.

#### Physicochemical properties

The **fat content** in the dry matter for the different types of Sulguni:

- not less 30% for Sulguni made from cow milk
- not less 45% for Sulguni made from buffalo milk
- not less 40% for Sulguni made from mix (buffalo and cow) milk
- not less 40% for Sulguni made from mix (cow and goat) milk
- not less 45% for smoked Sulguni

### **III. Description of the method of obtaining the product**

#### **Milk characteristics**

Sulguni is made from raw or pasteurized, whole or normalized milk. The use of milk powder is not permitted.

Sulguni Classic is produced using morning and/or evening fresh raw whole milk.

Sulguni Classic can be made manually.

#### **Curding**

The curding is obtained by introduction of animal or microbial rennet in the milk heated at a temperature of 32°- 39°C. To obtain this temperature, the milk can be heated. When the curd is firm, it is ready for discarding.

The use of lacto-bacterial starter is not allowed for Sulguni Classic.

#### **Discarding**

The curd is cut with a cheese harp or with hands until granules reach the size between a hazelnut and a walnut, then left between 5 to 20 minutes, before to extract the whey.

#### **Whey-off and maturation of the curd**

The curd is then poured in a tank or in vessels that allow the draining of the whey. After draining the whey, the curd is left in a vessel or reservoir for fermentation between 2 to 24 hours. Duration of fermentation depends on the temperature and the eventual use of lacto-bacterial starter.

In case of Sulguni Classic, a minimum of 5 hours is required.

The curd is ready for the next steps when the curd starts having small openings equally distributed on the entire curd section, but before that these opening increase in size and that the mass becomes too acid.

### **Kneading and moulding the Sulguni cheese**

The curd is then cut into thin layers, and placed in a very hot but not boiling water. It is stirred in water until it becomes uniformly stretching paste mass. The use of wooden spoon is permitted.

Then, the formation of the cheese must be done by kneading the mass, and folding it several times (not less four times), before forming a spherical or other desirable shape that is cooled down with cold water - salted or not - or with the remaining whey.

In case of Sulguni Classic, the kneading must be manual.

The cheese is then ready for salting process.

### **Salting**

The salting can be done either by direct application of dry salt on the surface of the cheese or by soaking the cheese in brine:

- Direct salting: after direct application of dry salt on the surface, the cheese is stored between 24 and 72 hours before being ready for consumption.
- – Salt is applied on the upper side of the cheese in case of Sulguni Classic.
- – Brine: The cheese is put to soak in brine with a concentration of 14-22% salt for 6 to 24 hours.

The sale of Sulguni is permitted after 24 hours from the start of salting process.

The producer is responsible for defining the shelf-life of the product.

### **Drying**

After salting, Sulguni can be stored in a dry and ventilated place to be dried for several days or weeks. Use of wooden shelves is permitted. After drying, Sulguni should be delivered to the final consumer under the name: “Dried Sulguni”, “Dried Sulguni Classic”.

### **Smoking**

After salting, fresh or dried Sulguni can be smoked in a smoking chamber by burning non-coniferous - e.g., pear, apple, alder, beech or quince wood or sawdust.

Cold and hot smoking methods are allowed:

- - When applying hot smoking method, the process lasts between 1 to 12 hours.
- - When applying cold smoking method, the process lasts between 72 hours and one week.

After smoking, Sulguni can be delivered to the final consumer under the name - “smoked Sulguni”.

#### **Addition of ingredients**

Different ingredients can be added during the kneading of the Sulguni or after the completion of the cheese making. All ingredients must be of Georgian origin.

The ingredients allowed are:

- Mint, tarragon, savoury and other herbs or spices
- Adjika
- Honey
- Wine and chacha
- Hazelnut, walnut, almond.

#### **IV. The definition of the geographical area**

The area of production of Sulguni PGI is the whole territory of Georgia. The milk used for the production of Sulguni PGI should originate from Georgia.

#### **V. Evidence that the product originates in the defined geographical area (traceability system)**

**a. Registration of the operators**

Each business-operator involved in one or more steps of the manufacturing process of Sulguni may log in to PGI Sulguni producer's organization. PGI Sulguni producers' organization possesses a list of registered persons with the right to use the protected geographical indication – Sulguni, defined by the legislation of Georgia. The requisites of business operators - title, address, identification code, contact information should be registered in the list. The list is subject to regular updates.

**b. Traceability criteria**

All stages of milking, cheese-making, ripening, cutting and packaging are performed inside, in the designated area, controlled and monitored conditions to ensure consistency in the quality and peculiarity of the product.

Traceability of the product must be ensured at the stages of milking, cheese-making, ripening, cutting, packaging and distribution of cheese.

To ensure traceability, every business operator connected to any stage of Sulguni PGI production process (milk producer, cheese producer, cheese cutter, packager) must keep relevant information related to the stages of production, processing and distribution of the product, any ingredient used in it, including packaging material, and maintain relevant documents and records, which enable the assessment of compliance with the requirements of milk and cheese origin, specifications and conditions of production and which will be submitted to the state control body upon request.

The traceability system is coordinated by Sulguni PGI organization, which defines the label to be accompanied to the product.

## **VI. The link between a given quality, the reputation or other characteristic of the product and the geographical origin**

### **Reputation**

The Protection of Sulguni as a PGI is mainly based on its reputation of the product of Georgian origin. The earliest written prove that cheese named Suluguni or Suldguni was produced in Georgia – namely Samegrelo and Svaneti, is in an Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language from XVII century by Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani, and next in another Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language by David Chubinishvili (XIX century). It is described as a stretch-curd kneaded flat cheese.

In the scientific study by Roland Topchishvili “From the history of Georgians’ eating culture – Suluguni” [Topchishvili, 2014], we can find the documental evidences of origin of this product. Here are some important data:

“In 1890s, due to high nutritional quality, Suluguni was imported overseas from the Poti Sea Port [Gugushvili, 1950; 94]. According to ethnographic data, it was made in historical-ethnical parts of the West of Georgia – Samegrelo, Svaneti, Imereti, Lechkhumi and Racha. In Samegrelo Sulguni was called “Selegini”, “Seleguni”, “Siogini”, and in Zemo (Upper) Imereti, Racha and Lechkhumi it was called “Gvajilla” or “Gvajilli [Topuria 1964; 46, 51; Ghloni, 1974; 52]. In Guria region Sulguni was called “double-kneaded” (“Gadazelili”).

It should be cooked even twice: “the experience shows that cooking twice is critical. If it is not cooked twice, then melted butter will cover Suluguni and prevent absorption of salt. After cheese is taken out it is shaped by hand on the tray called “churukhi”; with both hands sour cream is separated from cheese” [Topuria, 1964: 49-50]. “In order to store Suluguni for long, it was holed on one side and several such cheeses were banded in a way that they did not touch each other. Then banded rolls were hanged on the ceiling near fireplace or in the sun. Smoked and dried Suluguni could be stored for long” [Topuria, 1964:50]...

According to an article from the Ivane Javakhishvili Institute of History and Ethnography Sulguni is represented in various rituals known in Svaneti and Samegrelo that proves that this type of cheese was traditional to this area, because usually in rituals only traditional elements are present.

In the Soviet period, during 80-ies of XX century, an industrial production of Sulguni took place in almost all regions of Georgia and Sulguni and its reputation as a Georgian product was known through Soviet Bloc. **Human factors**

The culture of Sulguni production comes from west Georgia – Samegrelo and Svaneti, Traditional know-how has been transmitted from generation to generation and has spread to other regions in Georgia.

... Due to high humidity in Colchis lowlands storage of animal products was problematic. Because of limited number of cattle and lactation decrease from late autumn till early spring, people were short of milk and dairy products. To overcome this deficit people were seeking new techniques of producing dairy products, specifically cheese; Sulguni is an achievement made by Georgian farmers after extensive observation and creative thinking process...

As an ethnographer from Tbilisi - A. Kalantari notes, Sulguni seems to be introduced in Guria, Abkhazia, Imereti, Kobuleti and other places by Megrelian herders & cattle breeders.

## **VII. Packaging and labelling rules**

### **Packaging**

Sulguni placed on the market can be delivered to the final consumer whole or sliced, non-packed or packed. Packaging should not damage cheese texture.

### **Labelling**

The information about the marketed whole Sulguni or piece of cheese with the registered PGI, must be delivered to the consumer in accordance with the requirements of “Delivery of Information to consumer about food products” established by the legislation of Georgia. In addition:

- the name "Sulguni" or "Sulguni Classic" on the whole or sliced cheese must be followed by the mention "Protected Geographical Indication" and state quality mark for PGI, use of which is regulated by Georgian legislation.
- the additional mentions “Fresh”, "Dried", Aged” or "Smoked" must precede or follow immediately the name "Sulguni" or "Sulguni Classic";
- logos for “Sulguni” and “Sulguni Classic” defined by the PGI Association, application of which is voluntary, as shown below



PGI logos defined by the Sulguni PGI Association:

Sulguni



Sulguni Classic



## VIII. Control bodies

The control over the compliance of PGI Sulguni with the specification and its production characteristics is carried out in accordance with the Georgian legislation through :

- self-control by the producers of PGI Sulguni;
- internal control exercised by PGI Sulguni organization, which is entitled to assess the compliance of production process with the requirements of PGI Sulguni specifications at the place of production, to assess the compliance of organoleptic characteristics of the product with requirements of PGI Sulguni specifications, as well as control of traceability records, documents and other relevant information and to assist business operator in implementation of the State control.
- State control or external control carried out by the competent body - National Food Agency, Marshal Gelovani str. # 6, Tbilisi 0159, Georgia, or controlling body - a legal entity that has been delegated by the competent authority to perform a specific task related to state control and is accredited by the relevant body of Georgia or the Member States of the European Union and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).