

“საჯიკა/Ajika”

Registered in Georgia as a Geographical Indication

Registration №26, Registration date: 29/09/2022<sup>1</sup>

**NAME OF PRODUCT FOR WHICH REGISTRATION IS REQUESTED:** Ajika (Condiment)

1.8. Other products of Annex I of the Treaty (spices etc.)

**NAME AND ADDRESS OF APPLICANT:** The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia; Marshal Gelovani Ave. №6, 0159 Tbilisi, Georgia

**1. NAME:** “საჯიკა/Ajika”

**2. PRODUCT DESCRIPTION**

“საჯიკა/Ajika” is a spice/condiment having pasty consistency. It is widely used in both in the preparation of dishes and independently, as a spice on the table.

“საჯიკა/Ajika” has been prepared in Georgia during many centuries, primarily based on slightly different recipes in Abkhazia and Samegrelo. Currently, “საჯიკა/Ajika” production, in its variations, is already widespread throughout Georgia and is very popular among the population.

Recipes for “საჯიკა/Ajika” preparation were passed down orally or in writing form from generation to generation. According to the recipe used, “საჯიკა/Ajika” is characterized with different levels of spiciness and aroma.

According to these recipes, the necessary ingredients of the product are: red hot pepper, salt, garlic, dried spices and blue melilot. It is also allowed to add grinded or crushed walnuts, nuts, sunflower seeds and various herbs (dried and fresh). In order to reduce the spiciness, it is possible to replace the hot pepper with Bulgarian pepper (Lat. Capsicum annuum L) partially, as well.

Diligent preparation makes “საჯიკა/Ajika” – homogeneous, thickened spicy mass having dark red or reddish-brown color.

Fresh green pepper can be used instead of red pepper for “საჯიკა/Ajika” preparation. In this case “საჯიკა/Ajika” already has greenish tinge.

Rich and unique aroma of “საჯიკა/Ajika” finished product should be emphasized, which is due to diligent processing of ingredients and, as a result, intensive separation of ethers from fresh materials.

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<sup>1</sup> The list of Georgian GIs and AOs - [http://www.sakpatenti.gov.ge/en/state\\_registry/](http://www.sakpatenti.gov.ge/en/state_registry/)

The uniqueness of flavor, among other features, is due to the fact that the herbs grown and spices prepared in Georgia, usually distinguished with taste and aroma are used at product preparation.

### **3. METHOD OF PREPARATION:**

- Dried red pepper is washed, peeled, moistened, and dried in hang position;
- Dried red pepper is grinded in meat grinder. In the case of “საჯოჯა/Ajika” preparation with less spiciness, pepper is pre-cleaned from the seeds;
- The pepper is ground first coarsely, then finely;
- Pre-chopped garlic and condiments are added therein, and received mass is grinded several times in a grid;
- Received mass is salted, boiled, cooled, water is added therein, and it is stirred vigorously until obtaining of thick homogeneous mass;
- Then, according of taste, other ingredients are added.

The mass previously grinded in meat grinder is used in the case of "საჯოჯა/Ajika" preparation with green pepper.

### **4. GEOGRAPHICAL AREA**

Pepper, garlic, fresh herbs and dried spices used as finished product for “საჯოჯა/Ajika” preparation shall be produced only in the territory of Georgia. Ingredients such as walnuts, nuts, sunflower seeds and salt can be of non-Georgian origin too.

### **5. LINK WITH GEOGRAPHICAL AREA**

It should be noted that “საჯოჯა/Ajika” is uniquely of Abkhazian<sup>2</sup> origin, which is confirmed by its original name "Apirpil-Jika" (in Abkhazian language pepper salt).<sup>3</sup> The area of further distribution of this product under the name “საჯოჯა/Ajika” became Samegrelo, later – Western Georgia and Georgia in whole.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abkhazia>

<sup>3</sup>Georgian-Apkhazian Dictionary, 2012, K. Lomtadze, T. Gvantseladze, Intellect, Tbilisi, Georgia  
[http://www.nplg.gov.ge/gwdict/index.php?a=srch&id\\_srch=37938012da99b63d2b6605d6d04a20a1&il=en&p=1&visualtheme=gw\\_brand](http://www.nplg.gov.ge/gwdict/index.php?a=srch&id_srch=37938012da99b63d2b6605d6d04a20a1&il=en&p=1&visualtheme=gw_brand)

According to one of legends,<sup>4</sup> the origin of "Apirpil-Jika" is related to Abkhazian shepherds stayed for a long time in the mountains, on alpine pastures, to herd sheep. In order to diversify the meager ration consisting of only lamb and sheep milk, the shepherds added a mixture of herbs and salt to their meal.

Salt was obtained from the stock provided by cattle owners to feed the sheep (salt awakens the appetite of cattle, therefore, they consume more water and more food increasing their weight). Since salt was very expensive product at the time, hired shepherds stole it for their own consumption.

To prevent theft, the owners threw hot peppers on sheep food. However, salt with pepper turned out to be more interesting for shepherds. Moreover, further mixing of salt with pepper, spices and herbs further improved its taste characteristics.

Because like other products imported from America to Europe, the pepper spread in Georgia in the 15th century, we must assume that the origin of "Apirpil-Jika" is also related to this period.

Traditionally, in Abkhazia the pepper was sown in March. It was harvested when even the lowest fruit was reddened. After that, the tied pepper was hung and dried in "apatskha" – spinning hut (same "patskha" – a farm house or dwelling).

Abkhazian "Apirpil-Jika" was prepared in special vessel, flat stone, so called – "akhakia", having small depression in the middle. On the surface of second stone ("apkhniga") the ingredients of "Apirpil-Jika" were rubbed with two hands for a long time, until obtaining homogeneous mass. If desired, pepper was cleaned from the seeds to alleviate the bitterness, spiciness.

As mentioned, the original recipe underwent a number of changes. If in the old times the pepper was smoked for "Apirpil-Jika" preparation. Now less people use this method, and the pepper is dried without the use of smoke. In addition, instead of "akhakia", the families use more convenient tool for crushing pepper – "kvasanaki" – the mortar with pestle or meat grinder, while the enterprises use relatively high-performance technical equipment for this purpose.

Only a few ingredients were used for classic Abkhazian "Apirpil-Jika" preparation: red hot pepper, salt, garlic and dried coriander.

Currently, walnut, various spices and herbs added with taste are considered as traditional ingredients for "აჯიკა/Ajika" preparation.

It is especially important to note that by the order 202/67 of November 19, 2018, of the Director General of the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia, the status of monument of intangible cultural heritage was granted to the technology of preparation of Abkhazian "Apirpil-Jika" and Megrelian "Ajika",<sup>5</sup> that is a clear confirmation of the indigenous origin and high reputation of this product.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://imedineews.ge/ge/kultura/86432/ajikas-aramaterialuri-kulturuli-memkvidreobis-dzeglis-statusi-mienicha>

<sup>5</sup> Register of Intangible Monuments; Abkhazian Salt "Apropiljika" and Megrelian "Ajika" Preparation Technology; reg. №44. <https://www.heritagesites.ge/uploads/files/60b68d3b8fbb4.pdf>

Today in the Georgian market exist different varieties of “საჯოჯა/Ajika”, prepared in the family and industrially, as well. “საჯოჯა/Ajika” is one of the most important attributes of national dishes and Georgian table as a whole, which, along with other spices, has an honorable place in the menu of local restaurants.

## **6. CONFIRMATION OF ORIGIN**

The control of the production process in Georgia is ensured by the use of labeling of each individual batch of products on the market and the traceability marks on the packaging of individual products, as well as records of purchases, products, and sales prepared by manufacturers.

## **7. CONTROL**

Control of “საჯოჯა/Ajika” production in compliance with specifications shall be carried out by LEPL – National Food Agency.