

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

EU protected food names scheme: protected geographical indication

Arbroath Smokies

Product specification

“Arbroath Smokies”

PDO () PGI (*)

1. Responsible Department in the Member State:

Name: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
 Area 3A

Nobel House

Smith Square

London

SW1P 3JR

United Kingdom

Tel: 0207 238 6075

Fax: 0207 238 5728

Email: Protectedfoodnames@defra.gsi.gov.uk

2. Group:

Name: The Arbroath Fish Processors Association

Address: The Grange
 Inverkeilor by Arbroath
 Angus
 DD11 4UU
 Scotland

Tel:

Email:

Composition: Producer/processor (x) other ()

3. Type of product:

1.7: Fresh fish, molluscs and crustaceans and products derived there from

4. Specification (summary of requirements under Art. 7(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012)

4.1. Name Of Product:

“Arbroath Smokies”

4.2 Description:

‘Arbroath Smokies’ is the name given to a hot-smoked, headless and gutted whole haddock processed in Arbroath in accordance with the method of production set out below. In normal circumstances the haddock is sourced from the seas around Scotland and bought at Scottish ports. However, in exceptional circumstances, such as extreme weather conditions or chronic shortage, the fish may be sourced from outwith Scotland.

In size, they weigh between 350-550g and are sold in pairs as processed tied with jute string. In colour they are deep golden to mid brown externally, creamy white internally. In texture they are dry on the outside, moist and juicy on the inside with flesh which flakes and removes easily from the bone. They have a very pleasant, mild, fishy flavour with a light smoky taste and slight salt enhancement.

Because they are made from the freshest of fish and smoked in the traditional way, over an open fire, this imparts a succulence and flavour that cannot be matched by similar products which are smoked in mechanical kilns.

The Arbroath Smokie has been described as being to the humble haddock what prosciutto crudo is to the hind leg of a pig. It is the ultimate in flavour that can be achieved from the original article, and the secret, as with prosciutto, lies in the cure which gives the Smokie its delicious taste combining the subtle tang of smoke with the sweet, delicate flesh of the haddock.

4.3 Geographical area:

A coastal corridor with an inland boundary 8 kilometres radius from Arbroath Town House and extending to the community of West Mains in the north and the community of East Haven in the south.

4.4 Proof of Origin:

The minimum inspection procedures require that:

- Each producer is on a register of producers kept by the Arbroath Fish Processors Association and the nominated inspection body
- The raw materials (the haddock) is sourced from fishing vessels landing at officially designated Scottish fish markets. A written record of all purchases must be kept
- Checks against this written information will be made by the nominated inspection body

4.5 Method of production:

The haddock are purchased at auction at the coastal fish markets fresh and packed in ice. They are sourced by each producer from fishing vessels directly landing at officially designated Scottish fish markets. The fish are then headed by hand at the processing premises. They are then gutted and cleaned before being layered in containers of dry salt to reduce the moisture, add flavour and harden the outer skin. The length of time this process takes depends on the weight of the fish. Part way through the salting process, fish of equal size are paired and tied together by the tail, using locally produced jute string (once a by-product of the many spinning mills in the area). When salting is complete, the pairs of fish are washed (to remove any remaining salt) and hung to dry on triangular sectioned rails. This process further hardens the skin and prevents splitting when exposed to the heat of the smoking fires.

The smoking pit is then prepared. This pit, colloquially and traditionally known as 'the barrel' contains hardwood blocks of beech or oak which are placed at the bottom, ignited and allowed to burn off into a fierce blaze. The smoking process has three stages:

- (i) The fish are placed on their triangular rail over the barrel. They are covered, in order to reduce oxygen to the fire, which causes the flames to die down
- (ii) The heat generated by the fiercely burning embers causes the fish to release moisture which falls on the open fire creating high humidity. This heat and humidity completely cooks and colours the fish

- (iii) The fish are totally cooked in 45 to 60 minutes. Weather and the dryness of the wood do affect smoking times and the skill of the smoker is paramount in deciding how well the fish are smoking and when they are ready.

When the process is complete and the fish are cooked they are removed from the barrel still on their rails and allowed to cool. When cooled they are ready to eat.

The smoking process, still carried out by hand and reliant on skills passed down from generation to generation, is essentially unchanged from the methods used in the 19th century.

4.6 Link:

The Arbroath Smokie, as it is now known, was first recognised in the small fishing village of Auchmithie, about three miles north of Arbroath in the county of Angus, Scotland. The village itself was first documented in the Chartulary records of the ancient Abbey of Arbroath in 1434 and its origins are thought to be Norse, from the period when Scandanavian invaders settled on the coast of Scotland about 1000 years ago. This Scandanavian connection is relevant to the tradition of hot smoking fish, as it is known that hot smoking was a method used to preserve fish in Scandanavia at that time, carried with the invaders to the village.

How the Smokie came to Arbroath from Auchmithie is well documented. In 1705, the villagers of Auchmithie began to move south into Arbroath, accelerated by the efforts of Arbroath council to attract fishermen, to save the town's ailing fishing trade. Fishermen had previously lived under serfdom but by 1830, this practice was extinct and Auchmithie fishermen were free to move as they wished. Arbroath town council encouraged the fishermen and their families to the town by allocating proper sites to build the community. The people of Auchmithie then began to move in earnest to Arbroath, settling themselves in the 'fit o' the toon' (the foot of the town – the harbour area), bringing their boats, traditions and skills.

By the year 1920 the majority of the fisherpeople of Auchmithie were now in Arbroath occupying most of the harbour area. To this day this area of the town is predominantly inhabited by fisher or people of fisher descent. In fact the area is zoned for fish smoking by the present authorities.

With the advent of photography in the 19th century actual visual records became available proving beyond doubt the existence and importance of the smoking industry to the Arbroath area. The fact that so many of the current producers can trace their roots back through earlier generations of their families to the origin of the Arbroath Smokie illustrates not only how the skills needed to carry out the smoking process have been passed down over the years but also the deep rooted tradition of Arbroath Smokie production. Indeed the names of some of these producers (Spink, Swankie and Cargill) are Viking in origin. The characteristics of the Arbroath Smokie are linked to the geographical area on the basis of tradition, reputation, the smoking process and the skills of those involved in that process. Skills which have been passed down from generation to generation.

That tradition and the processes involved can be categorically proven and traced back to the late 19th century and the small fishing village of Auchmithie although the documentary evidence would suggest that the processes go back much earlier.

At that time, of course, there existed no refrigeration equipment or ice making capability now used so extensively in the preservation of fresh and perishable produce such as fish. In order to keep and extend the shelf-life of their perishable products the choice was salting, drying, smoking or a combination of all of these.

In addition, at that time the fishing community lived in extreme poverty and within tight geographical constraints. It was their very survival which demanded they lived off the land and the sea, and sold whatever produce they could spare to augment their income. As time progressed local fishermen and their wives would travel to outlying areas such as Dundee with baskets of fish on their backs and in their arms to sell on the streets. In this way the reputation of the Smokie began to spread beyond the immediate vicinity. The smoking process is different from that used to produce kippers or the Finnan Haddock which are cold smoked and need further cooking. Arbroath Smokies are hot smoked as described above being subjected to a short blast of fairly intense heat and this means the smoking process has to be carefully judged requiring skills acquired over many years. This truly traditional process is now universally associated with Arbroath and is one of the principal reasons for people to visit the town both to witness the traditional manufacturing process and to try for themselves a unique food.

4.7 Inspection body:

Name: Trading Standards Office

Address Environmental and Consumer Protection Department

Angus Council

12 Hill Terrace

Arbroath

Angus

Scotland

Tel: 01241 435600

Fax:

Email: tradstand@angus.gov.uk

The inspection body is an official public body conforming to the principles of the EN 45011 standard

4.8 Labelling:

N/A

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