

## PRODUCT SPECIFICATION

### “YORKSHIRE WENSLEYDALE” PDO ( ) PGI (✓ )

#### 1. Responsible department in the Member State: United Kingdom

Name: Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
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2. **Group:** Wensleydale Creamery  
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**Composition:** producers/processors (1) other (50 milk producers)

The applicant company is the only company producing 'Yorkshire Wensleydale' cheese in the defined area. However, 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 (summary of requirements under Art.4 (2))**

4.1 **Name:** Yorkshire Wensleydale

4.2 **Description:** Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese is a pressed cheese made from cow's milk. It can be made with either fresh, raw or, pasteurised milk.

The cheese is a creamy-white colour with an open crumbly, textured appearance. The outside of the cheese is more yellow, this inconsistency is the hallmark of a truly handmade product (particularly in the cloth-bound cheeses), and which is not found in mass-produced versions of Wensleydale cheese. Its firm crumbly, texture, is a result of a combination of the starter cultures, manual processes and the milk used. The cheese has a crumblier and less dense, solid texture than other similar products. It has a mild, clean, slightly sweet flavour, with a honeyed aftertaste. The cheese develops a fuller, deeper flavour as it matures.

The physico-chemical properties of the cheese are:

- pH: 4.4 to 5.4
- dry matter: minimum 54 %,
- fat content: minimum 48 % of the dry matter,
- sodium chloride: maximum 2.2 %.

Characteristics of the cheese:

- consistency: firm, slightly compact & flaky,
- colour: from white to ivory-yellow,
- aroma: lactic, slightly acidic, developing strong notes and long overall persistence in cheeses that have been well aged,
- flavour: slightly acidic, mellow and honeyed after taste becoming strong and flavoursome, in cheeses that have been well aged. Pleasant and distinctive aftertaste.
- appearance: milky white and slightly open
- texture: firm but slightly crumbly & flaky

The microbiological limits are as follows:

- *Escherichia coli*: < 100 colonies/gram,
- *Staphylococcus aureus*: < 100 colonies/gram,
- *salmonella species*: absence in 25 grams,

Yorkshire Wensleydale is moulded into traditional truckles/cylinders ranging in weight from 500g to 2?kg and into 20kg block shaped moulds. The cheese can be slod as a young cheese at two weeks but can also be aged for up to twelve months depending on the level of maturity required.

### **4.3 Geographical area:**

Wensleydale, in North Yorkshire, with the market town of Hawes at its centre. This area is defined by (and inclusive of) Sedbergh to the west and Bedale to the east. To the south the dale is bordered by Wharfedale, Nidderdale, Ribblesdale and Ripon, and Swaledale to the North.

**The area is defined by (and inclusive of):**

**To the west:** Lowgill, M6, Beck Foot and B6257, including Sedbergh, Gawthrop, Dent and Craghill.

**To the south:** From Craghill, east (crossing over the B6255), to Oughtershaw, and Cray. The boundary travels east to include the start of Bishopdale Beck, Walden Beck and the river cover (all of which flow into the river Ure), Little Whernside, Great Haw and Brown Ridge. The boundary includes the start of the two rivers flowing into Roundhill Reservoir, and the start of the river Laver, moving across to the B6265 at Risplith, Sawley and extends across to the A61. From the A61 the boundary travels directly east to Boroughbridge / A1.

**To the east:** The A1 north from Boroughbridge, past Bedale and Catterick to the A6136 junction (northern).

**To the north:** West from the A1 to Hudswell (south of Richmond), to Downholme, Stainton, then extends along the boundary between Wensleydale & Swaledale, including Redmire moor, Apedale Head, West Bolton Moor, Askrigg Common, Abbotside Common (including the start of Whity Gill, Cogill Beck, Sargill Beck) across to Lovely Seat. From Lovely Seat, the boundary moves west to include the start of Fossdale Gill, Hearne Beck, East Gill, West Gill, to the head of the river Ure on Lunds Fell. The boundary crosses the B6259 at Aisgill, and continues west to Low Haygarth on the A683, and then across to Lowgill at the M6.

The area defined above is based upon the traditional and historical area for the making of Yorkshire Wensleydale Cheese. During the 1930's there were several key makers of Wensleydale Cheese and they formed a trade association known as the Wensleydale Cheese Joint Conference. The members were all situated within this area. However, today there are only two sites that are still making Yorkshire Wensleydale – Hawes and Kirkby Malzeard

#### **4.4 Proof of origin:**

Milk volume and temperature checks are recorded from each farm, which form the basis of payment and traceability systems.

Every delivery of milk undergoes quality tests before it is accepted. Delivery details including volume and the storage vessel in which the milk is stored are recorded. As the cheese vats are filled with milk, a record is taken detailing the vessel in which the milk was stored. This enables the cheese produced from each vat to be traced back to the tanker load and in turn the farms from which the milk was collected. Each vat of cheese is allocated a batch code, which is made up of the day and month of production and the number of the vat in which it was produced.

This code follows the cheese through the packing procedures and storage, through to the final cheese being dispatched. This enables the cheese to be traced back to the vat in which it was produced and in turn back to the farm(s) from which the milk was collected.

#### **4.5 Method of production:**

Fresh raw milk is brought to the creamery within a few hours of milking. The milk is pasteurised at the cheesemakers premises. For unpasteurised cheese this process is omitted. The milk is transferred into cheese vats, and bulk starter culture is added and stirred throughout this 'ripening' period. Rennet is added and the milk is allowed to coagulate. The coagulum is cut to separate the curds from the whey. The curds and whey are 'scalded' (with heat from the sides of the vat), and stirred until the point at which the curds can be settled and the whey drained: 'pitching'. The curds are then 'blocked (cut into large pieces), turned, cut again and stirred. This is a very important stage that relies upon the skill of the cheesemaker to ensure the texture is correct. Salting of the curd is done by hand, which is a very skilled process that requires even distribution. The salted curds are milled to a finer size and the cheese moulds are then filled.

The moulds used to make Yorkshire Wensleydale range from very large traditional cylindrically shaped cheeses up to 20kg through to smaller truckles. The filled moulds are put into press for between 12 to 48 hours to achieve their final shape. Once taken from the moulds, some cheeses are bound in muslin and placed on shelves in a drying room, where they acquire additional flavours from the creamery itself. These cheeses are manually turned, before being placed in a store to mature for a minimum of 1week and up to 12 months. (Some may be packed directly from press before being placed in the store and some cheese is also selected for maturing for 6 to 12 months.)

Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese may be cut and packed in a variety of formats; waxed, flow wrapped and/or vacuum packed prior to dispatch.

#### **4.6 Link:**

The historical tradition of cheesemaking in the area dates back through centuries. The art and skill of cheesemaking came along with the settlement of Cistercian monks. This knowledge has developed and passed through generations of Cheesemakers. Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese has been made in the area for over 500 years.

The unique flavour and taste of Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese is derived from three main factors:

##### 1. The characteristics of the fresh, local milk due to the geology and diverse flora of the geographical area

The designated area is typically of upland farmland of generally thin soil over limestone. The northern climate is often especially cold and wet, which means that the flora is different to neighbouring areas with a similar geological structure, but more favourable climate. Farming methods are typically extensive and the fields retain a considerable bio-diversity. The soil quality of the area ranges from rich fertile loam along the valleys to fine loam and clay soils in the upland areas. This in turn provides a diverse range of plants

which flourish in wildflower rich hay meadows, pastures in the dale bottoms, and open heather moorlands. Many species are adapted to certain conditions and this leads to a wide diversity of plants.

## 2. The unique bulk starter cultures

Much of the production process for Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese continues to be done by hand and so the skills needed to make a product meeting the required description and quality standards for this cheese continue to be as relevant today as in the past. The cheese making process requires that every vat of cheese is closely monitored with recording times, temperatures and acidity levels all documented. When working with 'living' cultures, no one day may be the same as the next; the 'make' may be fast or slow, which therefore relies upon the specific savoir faire of the cheese maker, which is learnt over time, to ensure production of a Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese of optimum quality in terms of appearance, texture and flavour is produced.

The starter cultures used in the cheese making process for Yorkshire Wensleydale are an important factor in the quality of the finished cheese. The starter cultures used are grown from mesophilic aromatic cultures, which can be either sub cultured daily from traditional mother cultures and grown overnight in bulk starter media or grown from deep frozen or freeze dried cultures – again grown overnight in the same bulk starter media – typically reconstituted skimmed milk.

The primary cultures are commercially available but are sub-cultured for months. The mother cultures are 'woken up' from their freeze-dried state and grown and run as individual cultures for their life cycle. Groups of 18 mother cultures run on a 3 day cycle, forming 3 groups of 6. On a daily basis the best 3 cultures from their respective group are identified and grown in large tanks which will then be blended together immediately before cheese making and used as the starter culture for the days make.

The individual cultures are grown as individuals to the point they get into the milk to do their job of souring the milk. The 3 cultures are chosen on the basis of their age and vitality on the day and usually consist of a young culture, another of medium age and a third more mature culture. As the older ones lose their vitality and performance, they are thrown out and a new culture is 'woken up' and introduced to the team. However, after being woken up it may be weeks or months before they actually get used for cheese making. By running these cultures as separate mother cultures, they gain individual characteristics and strengths and build up immunity to phage. This is a unique and complex system which has been used in the production of Yorkshire Wensleydale Cheese for a long time.

The quality and consistency of the bulk starter contributes to many aspects of the cheese making process and hence the final quality of the cheese. The addition of bulk starter to the pasteurised milk contributes to the initial acidity of the milk and helps with the coagulation of the milk after the addition of rennet.

A good bulk starter is fundamentally responsible for the consistent acid development throughout the cheese making process from rennet addition through to salting. The bulk starter which is a mixture of acid producing bacteria and flavour producing bacteria is one of the two key contributors to the flavour and texture of the finished cheese. The quality of the milk is the other key contributor to the finished cheese flavour. Also, the action of the starter cultures go on long after the cheese has been made in the cheese room. The cultures go on working throughout the cheese maturation process to affect flavour, texture and appearance.

The successful selection and management of cultures for bulk starter use is critical in achieving long term consistency and quality in the finished cheese and key technical skills need to be applied on a daily basis to achieve this consistency. The sub culturing of the starter cultures is a skilled selection process, which looks at the visual quality of the cultures, flavour and also identifies cultures with optimum acidity levels to achieve the desired cheese flavour is used to select different strains for sub culturing.

The role and responsibility of a cheese grader is to test / grade cheese by using their senses: sight, smell, touch / feel, taste. A cheese grader can recognise individual cheese characteristics between different cheese varieties and can also recognise differing cheese characteristics within the same variety of cheese as well as being able to detect if a Wensleydale cheese had been made with a starter culture as used at the Wensleydale Creamery, or whether it was made with a DVI (Direct Vat Inoculation) starter. Notable differences between a Wensleydale cheese made with bulk starter culture and Wensleydale cheese made with a DVI starter would be:

- DVI Wensleydale cheese may have a more solid, denser texture
- DVI Wensleydale cheese may have a drier taste / feel
- DVI Wensleydale cheese may have a different taste / flavour, which can be described as being 'flat, singular and un complex' when compared to the milky taste and flavour of Wensleydale cheese made with traditional bulk starter cultures. However, From time to time, Direct Vat Inoculation (DVI) cultures may be used, if the bulk starter fails. Also, specific strains of DVI cultures may be used to complement the bulk starter.

### 3. The skill and labour involved with the cheese making:

The cheese making process follows a recipe, where the process for every vat of cheese is documented, recording times, temperatures and acidity levels. However, when working with 'living' cultures, no one day may be the same as the next; the 'make' may be fast or slow, which therefore relies upon the savour faire of the cheese maker, which is learnt over time, to ensure that a cheese of optimum quality in terms of appearance, texture and flavour is produced. For example, the cheese maker may adjust 'ripening' times, the amount of turning required, scald temperatures, the speed / rate that the whey is released and the size of the cut curd pieces, dependent upon the 'speed' of the make to ensure that a cheese of a consistent quality in terms of appearance, texture and flavour is produced. The cheese makers will also use

their skill and judgement to identify the correct texture and feel of the junket and curd and make necessary adjustments to the 'make' accordingly to ensure that cheese of a consistent quality in terms of appearance, texture and flavour is produced. All these factors play an essential part in ensuring that the finished product displays the following visual and organoleptic characteristics: creamy white colour, with a firm flaky open texture and a mild slightly sweet flavour with a honeyed aftertaste.

The responsibility for quality controlling the Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese is then passed on to and reliant upon the ability of the cheese grader to test / grade cheese by using their senses: sight, smell, touch / feel, taste. The cheese grader must be able to recognise individual cheese characteristics between different cheese varieties and can also recognise differing cheese characteristics within the same variety of cheese. Such skills can only be acquired over time meaning that the cheese makers are introduced to this process at an early stage. An experienced cheese grader, having initially started working as a cheese maker, can detect what type of grade the Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese will be, as soon as he 'bores' / plunges the cheese iron into a cheese.

Throughout all stages of cheese making, the cheese maker carries out a number of acid development checks to monitor the acid development over time, to ensure that the desired texture and flavour is achieved. The blocking, turning, cutting and stirring together with salting are very important stages in the production of the cheese, which also relies upon the skill of the cheese maker to ensure the texture and flavour of the cheese is correct. Every vat of cheese is graded. Additional grading to identify particular cheese flavours / age profiles, takes place for cheese selection for customers prior to packing and despatch. Bacterial and chemical tests are also carried out to ensure industry and customer standards and specifications are met. Cheese not making the required standards will not be placed on the market using the protected name.

Yorkshire Wensleydale has a long established and enduring reputation. It has been made in the Wensleydale area for hundreds of years and cheese was first made in the area by French Cistercian Monks who settled in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Following the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry V111 in the mid 1500's the cheese making skills were passed to local farmers, who made cheese as a way of preserving surplus milk.

However, in 1897, local corn and provisions merchant, Edward Chapman became the first commercial cheese maker in the area when he opened the first creamery in Hawes. He bought milk from local farms and made Wensleydale Cheese. Edward Chapman's dairy faced closure during the depression of the 1930's, but was rescued by the famous Kit Calvert, who rallied the creditors and persuaded them to support him to run the Hawes Creamery. For the next 30 years Kit Calvert built a thriving Cheese business with operations at Hawes, Kirkby Malzeard, Masham and Coverham. Kit sold his business to the Milk Marketing Board in 1966.

In 1992 the Hawes Creamery was closed as part of a large company rationalisation plan, and the cheese making operation was to be moved to Lancashire. However, there was a management buyout of the Creamery and cheese making resumed in November 1992 and the Wensleydale Creamery at Hawes continues today, with its sister Creamery at Kirkby Malzeard, to make award winning Yorkshire Wensleydale as it has for the past 112 years.

Much of the area has been designated an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA), where the use of chemicals, artificial fertiliser and nitrogen is restricted. Wensleydale has a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interests (SSSI), with several important grasslands, which are among some of the best examples of traditionally managed hay meadows in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Many awards and accolades for Yorkshire Wensleydale have been won. Gold medals and class wins have been achieved over recent years and in 2011, Yorkshire Wensleydale was Best Wensleydale at The Great Yorkshire Show Cheese and Dairy Show and Gold medals were won at the International Cheese Show, Nantwich and at the World Cheese Awards in November 2011.

The link between Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese and the geographical area is strongly associated in consumers' minds. The product is featured in numerous tourist guides aimed at visitors to the area and this has helped its reputation both within the immediate geographical area but also beyond with the product sought after as a premium cheese in all kinds of retail outlets and also in restaurants. There are many references to the cheese in cookery books, history books and in literature.

For example the poet and critic, TS Eliot writing in *The Observer Newspaper* in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century described the product as "The Mozart of cheeses." The same writer also recognised the cheese's special place in English culture in the following passage, "The reader must remind himself of how much is embraced by the term 'culture'. It includes all the characteristic activities and interests of a people: Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the twelfth of August, a cup final, the dog races, **Wensleydale cheese**, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth-century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar....Then we have to face the strange idea that what is part of our culture is also part of our *lived* religion". "*Notes Towards The Definition of Culture*" (Faber and Faber 1948)

Today, Yorkshire Wensleydale can be bought in all of the major UK retailers, independent delicatessens and throughout the food service sector. Yorkshire Wensleydale also finds increasing support in many export markets such as the USA and Canada where it is recognised as a top quality added value cheese with true roots of provenance and authenticity.

The reputation of Yorkshire Wensleydale is based upon quality, consistency, provenance and authenticity. In practice the milk used for the production of Yorkshire Wensleydale is sourced from local farms predominantly within the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Yorkshire Wensleydale Cheese provides employment opportunities in the area that would not exist were it not for a thriving cheese business. Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese is a community based product, built on centuries of tradition, which has to be made in the area by local skilled people, using locally produced milk from family farms. The whole marketing effort behind the product seeks to communicate these strong and resilient values which today's modern consumers are clearly willing to support.

Wensleydale Cheese made in Wensleydale is recognised nationally and internationally as the only genuine Wensleydale Cheese

#### **4.7 Inspection body:**

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#### **4.8 Labelling:**