

PRODUCT SPECIFICATION

“Stilton Cheese”

PDO (√) PGI (§)

1 RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT IN THE MEMBER STATE: UNITED KINGDOM

Name: Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Address: EU Food Policy Team - Food and Policy Unit

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2 GROUP

Name: Stilton Cheese Makers Association

Address: PO Box 384A Surbiton Surrey KT5 9LQ

Tel: 020 8255 1334

Website: www.stiltoncheese.com

Email: enquiries@stiltoncheese.com

Composition: Producers/processors (6) Other (§)

3 TYPE OF PRODUCT

Cheese Class 1.3

4 SPECIFICATION

4.1 NAME:

“Stilton”

4.2 DESCRIPTION:

Stilton cheese is made in three varieties, White Stilton, Blue Stilton, Mature Blue and/or Vintage Blue Stilton. Each variety can be made only from pasteurised cow's milk.

White Stilton

White Stilton is a white cheese made in cylindrical form from full cream pasteurised cows milk (which can be standardised according to season) produced by dairy herds from the three counties of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire (in times of shortage milk may also be sourced from the surrounding counties of Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire), with no applied pressure and forming its own crust or coat.

White Stilton

- Flavour:** A fresh, clean, acidic flavour.
- Body:** Internal: A uniform white colour, with a flaky or crumbly open moist
External: A smooth, moist, white exterior coat, free from surface mould, blemishes or mites.
- Shape:** Regular and uniform in circumference.
- Texture:** Free from discolouration, gas holes and chalkiness.
- Fat:** Minimum 48 % milk fat in the dry matter.

Blue Stilton

As Blue Stilton matures so its characteristics change in terms of taste and texture. Two distinct varieties of Blue Stilton are produced and sold – Blue Stilton and Mature/Vintage Blue Stilton. Typically, Blue Stilton is graded around 6 weeks of age.

Each cheese is assessed as for its flavour, texture, body, degree of veining, shape and coat condition. Cheeses which do not meet the required standards are rejected.

Cheeses which meet the required standards are either selected for sale as Blue Stilton shortly after the initial grading, or the cheese is allowed to mature further. Cheeses which mature further are re-graded to assess their suitability for sale as Mature Blue Stilton and/or Vintage Blue Stilton. The grade applied to the Stilton will thus depend on the length of time during which the cheese has been matured. Typically the following ages will apply:

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Blue Stilton | 6 to 12 weeks |
| Mature Blue Stilton | 10 to 15 weeks |
| Vintage Blue Stilton | more than 15 weeks |

Actual length of maturing will vary from season to season depending on natural variations in milk composition, the size of the cheese, storage temperature and according to individual manufacturer methods. Categorisation will therefore be based primarily on flavour and texture subject to the above guidelines on age.

Blue Stilton has a white coloured curd, a slightly crumbly texture and a slightly sharp flavour with a milky background.

Mature Blue Stilton has an “off white” to yellowy coloured curd, a softer, creamy texture and a mellow, full flavoured, creamy taste.

Vintage Blue Stilton has an “off white” to yellowy coloured curd, a drier texture than the Mature and a stronger more complex flavour with a creamy background.

Blue Stilton

Blue Stilton is a blue moulded cheese made in cylindrical form from full cream pasteurised cows milk (which can be standardised according to season) produced by dairy herds from the three counties of Leicestershire, Derbyshire, and

Nottinghamshire (in times of shortage milk may also be sourced from the surrounding counties of, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire), with no applied pressure and forming its own crust or coat.

The Blue Stilton cheese has the following characteristics:

Flavour: A clean subtle flavour.

Body: Internal: A uniform creamy white colour except for blue/green mould radiating from the centre with a velvety or flaky open texture free from gas holes and chalkiness.

External: Forms a slightly wrinkled crust or coat. Colour variable

Colour: Variable.

Shape: Regular and uniform in circumference.

Fat: Minimum 48 % milk fat in the dry matter.

Mature Blue and/or Vintage Blue Stilton

Mature Blue and/or Vintage Blue Stilton is a fully mature blue moulded cheese made in cylindrical form from full cream pasteurised cows milk (which can be standardised according to season) produced by dairy herds from the three counties of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire (in times of shortage milk may also be sourced from the surrounding counties of Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire), with no applied pressure and forming its own crust or coat.

The Mature Blue and/or Vintage Blue Stilton has the following characteristics:

Flavour: A mellow mature flavour

Body: Internal: A uniform creamy yellow white colour except for blue/green mould radiating from the centre with a creamy/velvety texture, free from gas holes and chalkiness.

External: Forms a slightly wrinkled crust or coat. Colour variable

Colour: Variable.

Shape: Regular and uniform in circumference.

Fat: Minimum 48 % milk fat in the dry matter.

4.3 GEOGRAPHICAL AREA:

The Counties of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire

4.4 PROOF OF ORIGIN:

To maintain traditional standards any milk brought in is carefully monitored by the master cheesemaker.

All milk is subject to strict quality controls regarding its hygienic and compositional quality with daily and frequent testing of the milk taking place. Milk is tested on arrival to ensure that the milk is suitable for cheese making in terms of its hygienic quality, its compositional quality, its organoleptic quality (free of taints) and that the milk is free from antibiotics. Test results of each tanker load of milk are kept. Production of Stilton cheese requires there are no detectable levels of antibiotics or other inhibitory substances above internationally accepted levels.

The traceability system in place proves the milk comes from farms in the designated area (and in times of shortage from farms in the surrounding Counties) only.

- Contracted milk is delivered in insulated tankers.
- Each delivery is accompanied by a record of the farms from which the milk has been collected.
- Records are maintained by the receiving dairy using the address and postcode to verify that the milk supplying farms are in the designated area.

Where milk is brought in from non-contracted farms, the consignment notes will identify the vehicle route and post code of the milk proving milk supply comes from within the designated area (or in times of shortage from one of the surrounding counties).

- From the time the milk is received by the dairy there is a backward tracing record system that enables each cheese to be traced to:the day of manufacture and the vat number in which the cheese was made
- the silo from which the milk was drawn
- the tanker in which the milk was delivered
- the farms from which the milk was collected
- the postcodes of the farms

Each batch of cheese is clearly labelled and will be subject to a positive release system to ensure that the cheese meets all legal standards. Results of all tests are available to the dairy as part of the traceability system required by all of the major retailers in the UK and overseas.

4.5 METHOD OF PRODUCTION:

White Stilton, Blue Stilton and Mature Blue and/or Vintage Blue Stilton cheeses are made throughout the year in cheese making dairies within the County Boundaries of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire

Fresh liquid cows milk is collected from within the three counties of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire (and in times of shortage milk may also be sourced from the surrounding counties of Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire) and delivered regularly. The milk is then tested and may be standardized according to season.

The milk is then pasteurised and pumped into vats where a starter culture and coagulant (animal rennet or non animal rennet) are added. The milk forms curds which are cut with knives to help release the whey. The following day the curd is cut into small blocks, milled into walnut sized pieces and salted, then tipped into cylindrical cheese moulds.

In addition to the starter culture, a blue mould – *penicillium roqueforti* - is added to the milk and/or sprayed onto the curds in order to generate the blue veins for Blue Stilton and Mature Blue and/or Vintage Blue Stilton only.

Stage 1

White Stilton, Blue Stilton and Mature Blue and/or Vintage Blue Stilton go through the following stage:

In a temperature and humidity controlled environment, the curds in their moulds are allowed to drain and settle evenly.

After a short period the moulds are turned top to tail to facilitate this draining. For up to seven days they remain there and are turned regularly, to ensure an even distribution of moisture.

Stage 2

Then all three types of cheese are moved to the Second Stage. The delicate curds have now settled into the familiar Stilton drum shape.

The mould is gently removed and the surface is sealed. This helps to prepare the surface of the cheese for the formation of the coat or rind and effectively seals it, preventing oxygen from entering the tiny airways which lie inside the cheese around the pieces of curd.

The process for making White Stilton stops here. After they have been wrapped and chilled the cheeses are ripe and ready for selling after about seven days.

Stage3

However, the process for making Blue Stilton and Mature Blue and/or Vintage Blue Stilton carries on as follows:

Blue Stilton cheeses may be placed in Stage 3 or may be moved straight to Stage 4. In Stage 3 cheeses are placed in a temperature and humidity controlled environment. Each cheese is turned on a regular basis to ensure even drainage, before moving on again.

Stage 4

Thereafter, the Blue Stilton and Mature Blue and/or Vintage Blue Stilton cheeses are turned less regularly and the ripening temperature and humidity carefully adjusted to give the optimal conditions for the final stage of maturation.

At about six weeks the Blue Stilton and Mature Blue and/or Vintage Blue Stilton cheeses are pierced with stainless steel needles about the size of skewers. This allows air to enter the heart of the cheese which activates the *pénicillium roqueforti* blue mould present in the curd and the blue veining begins to develop.

The cheeses are left to ripen, turned regularly and may then be pierced again.

Stage 5

Each batch of Blue and Mature Blue and/or Vintage Blue Stilton is graded individually so that customers, who specify the degree of ripeness and openness of texture they prefer, can have their Stilton packed and dispatched exactly to suit their needs.

4.6 LINK

Stilton cheese, a unique product known and respected worldwide, has been made in the three counties of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire for generations. The cheese became known as Stilton because it was at the Bell Inn in this village that the cheese was first sold to the public. A coaching stop on the road between London and York, the Bell Inn would have had many customers from far and wide. The first literary reference to Stilton is in Daniel Defoe's "Tour through England and Wales" published in 1727 where he notes that he "passed through Stilton, a town famous for cheese". From the middle of the 18th century onwards virtually all of the cheese would have been made on farms in Leicestershire and in later years in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire as well. In the 20th century, as a result of a continually expanding demand for Stilton, twelve pioneering farmers met in 1911 in the village of Long Clawson, near Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire and formed a company to make Stilton cheese. This was the start of one of several cooperatives set up to improve the quality of Stilton by making the cheese in better conditions, and in larger quantities than were possible on the farm.

At this stage, the process for making Stilton was defined. This required that the cheese is made in cylindrical form from full cream milk from dairy herds. Be made with no applied pressure and allowed to form its own crust or coat. Made in the District of Melton Mowbray and surrounding areas falling within the counties of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, the word Stilton has, for nearly the last 100 years, been used in connection with cheese made in this area and according to the process defined.

Originally, milk for the manufacture of Stilton cheese was drawn exclusively from local farms near the producing plants. But as production has grown and in particular as demand for Stilton cheese has increased around the Christmas period, at times of the year milk will be drawn from further afield and outside the three counties. However, even today the vast majority of milk used for the manufacture of Stilton cheese still comes from within the three counties.

The processes by which Stilton cheeses are made have been established and evolved over the last 250 years. The knowledge has been handed down through generations of families and there is a unique pool of local knowledge and expertise.

The process involves a unique recipe using the basic ingredients of milk, rennet, starter and salt combined with local expertise in the control of temperature and humidity as the cheese is taken through its various stages of ripening.

In the case of Blue Stilton and Mature Blue and/or Vintage Blue Stilton, expertise is also required in terms of the addition of the *penicillium roqueforti* blue mould and in the timing and method of piercing the cheese.

In addition, Stilton cheese has to be selected to suit precise needs of individual customers both within and outside the European Community. In all of these activities there is a high degree of skilled labour requiring not only standard food hygiene skills but also the unique knowledge of how to produce a consistently high standard of Stilton cheese regardless of seasonal fluctuations in the normal composition of the milk and in ambient temperatures. These skills are unique to the defined area.

The climatic conditions existing in the counties of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire play a great part in the production of Stilton cheese. The counties of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire are situated in the East Midlands, in the central part of England, and experience a temperate climate. The temperature rarely reaches extremes and the humidity is less than in the rest of England. These moderate conditions are essential for producing Stilton cheese.

In addition, the East Midlands offer particular geographical conditions which give Stilton cheese its distinctive taste. Thanks to the high level of the water table, the counties of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire provide a very rich soil most appropriate for dairy farming.

Consequently, because the cows feed on grass growing on a rich soil, they produce rich high quality milk, necessary for making Stilton cheese. Evidence suggests that Stilton cheeses have been made in the defined area for more than 250 years and indeed the area is famed for its Stilton cheese. Any cheese made under a similar process but in a different geographical area could not bear the name Stilton.

4.7 INSPECTION BODY:

Name: Product Authentication inspectorate (PAI)

Address: Rowland House
65 High Street
Worthing

West Sussex

BN11 1DN

Tel: 01903 237799

Fax: 01903 204445

enquiries@thepaigroup.com

The inspection body conforms to the principles of EN 45011 standard.

4.8 LABELLING:

STILTON labels will bear the European Community logotype as well as the word STILTON in order to inform the public that the product has been granted a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO).

i) Third party cheese packaging establishments may use the indications given above on pre-packaged portions of STILTON cheese provided that:

a) Up to date records are maintained to show:

- The quantities of STILTON cheese that have been delivered to the establishment

And

- The quantities of the said cheese that have been despatched from the establishment

b) The records are made available for inspection by duly authorised persons

ii) Manufacturers of processed foods may use the indications given above provided that the foods in question actually contain STILTON cheese which meets the aforementioned requirements. STILTON cheese may have been processed prior to its use for manufacture.