

Product specification for New Forest Pannage Ham

A protected geographical Indication (PGI)

Responsible country: Great Britain

GB number: F0088

Competent authority

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

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Email: ukgiapplications@defra.gov.uk

Applicant group

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Composition: Producers 1

Type of product (as in Annex XI Implementing Regulation 668/2014)

Class: 1.2 Meat Products (cooked, salted, smoked, etc.)

1. Product name(s)

New Forest Pannage Ham

2. Description

New Forest Pannage Ham is an air-dried ham made specifically with pork from pigs that have been released into the New Forest during the preceding 'Pannage Season' for a minimum of 50 days. The pigs eat large quantities of acorns and beech mast during this time, and this has a marked and very beneficial effect on the flavour of the meat, which becomes buttery and nutty and is often darker in colour and gamier in flavour than pork that has not been fed on acorns; it has been a sought-after seasonal product in the New Forest area for decades.

The ham is made using the boned leg above the knee, skinned and trimmed to give a 'tear-drop' shape. It is cured with a curing salt containing a nitrate and/or nitrite salt (sodium chloride content in finished ham not to exceed 5% and nitrate/nitrite level not to exceed 200ppm), and is flavoured with a blend of black pepper, white pepper, and fennel seed.

Organoleptic characteristics:

Colour and appearance: colour ranging from dark pink to purplish-red, marbled appearance when cut.

Flavour and aroma: delicately nutty and buttery flavoured meat with a hint of the herbs and spices; not very salty or sweet; characteristic and pleasant aroma of air-dried ham with notes of fennel.

Texture: close firm texture, not fibrous.

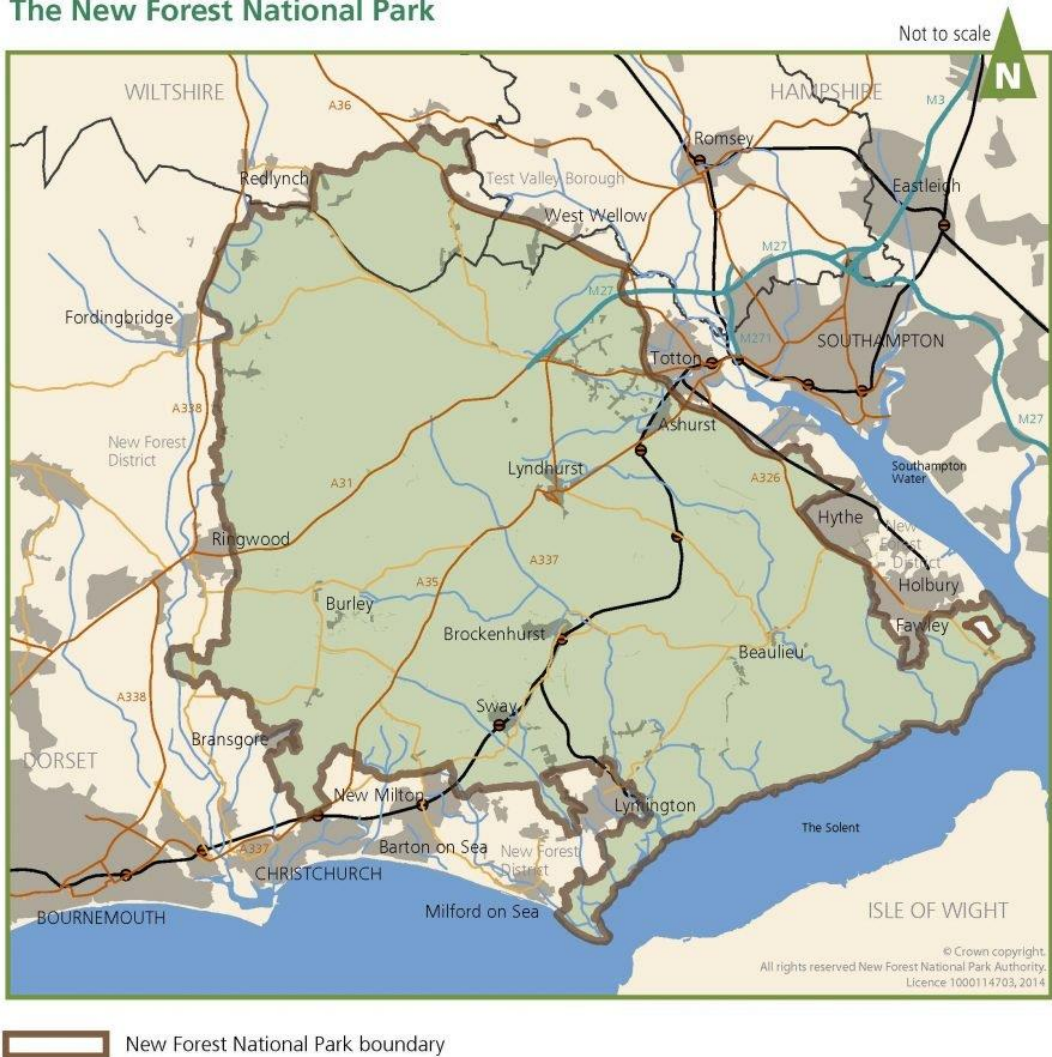
Fat: glossy, yellowish white in colour, aromatic, with a pleasant taste and melting texture. Its consistency varies with the proportion of acorns in the diet

The Water Activity (a_w) in the finished product must be no higher than 0.85.

3. Geographical area

New Forest Pannage Ham may only be made from pigs that have been reared within and released into the New Forest (see map below) during the preceding Pannage Season. New Forest Pannage Ham however may be made by producers in the counties of Hampshire, Dorset, and Wiltshire.

The New Forest National Park



New Forest Boundaries and adjoining counties

4. Proof of origin

The pigs must be reared on farms within the defined geographical area of the New Forest (see map). In order to be used to make New Forest Pannage Ham the pigs must have been released into the forest for the duration of the preceding Pannage season (the dates to be determined by the Forestry Commission and the Verderers of the New Forest) for a minimum of 50 days and must have a Marking Receipt to show that they have been registered to go into the Forest for Pannage. The Marking Receipts must be kept by the farmer for not less than 3 Years after the pig has been slaughtered. The pigs should be identified by means of a 'Slap Mark' or other identifying mark before slaughter in order to ensure that the carcasses returned by the abattoir are the same as those submitted for slaughter.

From anecdotal evidence the flavour of the pork meat that is imparted by the diet of acorns takes time to develop. The point at which the flavour from the acorns is at its peak is approximately 6-8 weeks after they have stopped eating acorns so the pigs earmarked for New Forest Pannage Ham should be slaughtered within 8 weeks of the end of the Pannage Season.

Outside of the Pannage Season the pigs may be fed on a proprietary pig feed; the constituents of which are typically wheat, barley, brewers grains (malted barley which has been used by brewers for beer making and is a waste product), soya, and molasses.

When providing legs of Pannage Pork to producers of New Forest Pannage Ham the farmer should supply a 'Certificate of Conformance' stating the number of legs supplied and that the legs are from Pannage Pigs that have been released into the New Forest, that the Marking Fee was paid for all pigs related to the sale, that they slaughtered within the time constraints, and were reared within the designated are of the New Forest (see Appendix A).

Records of traceability must be kept by farmers selling the Pannage pork legs and by the producers of New Forest Pannage Ham through all stages of production for inspection as required by the Inspection Body.

Certificates of Conformance should be held by both the farmer and the producer of the ham for minimum period of 3 years.

5. Method of production

The leg is cut to remove the shank (the lower part of the leg below the knee) and the femur and aitch bone are removed by tunnel boning techniques. The leg is skinned, leaving the fat on the meat, and any loose parts of meat are trimmed.

The boned leg is then dry cured by addition of curing salt into the 'tunnel'. A proprietary bacterial fermentation culture, and flavourings (black and white pepper and fennel seed) is also added at this time. The culture is used to enhance the colour and flavour of the ham and most importantly to reduce the potential for contamination by harmful bacteria such as

Listeria monocytogenes. The amount of curing salt should be enough to give a finished salt content in the air-dried ham of 4% to 5%. Curing is carried out at refrigerated temperatures (2°C to 5°C) and takes between 2 and 4 weeks, depending on the size of the leg; a leg weighing 2kg will take 2 weeks to cure but a large leg weighing up to 5kg or more will take 4 weeks to cure. If the correct percentage of salt by weight is added to each piece of meat then full curing will take place within this time.

After curing the meat is secured within a net or tied with strings to form it into a characteristic 'tear-drop' shape. It is then air-dried in conditions as follows:

- temperatures ranging from 10°C to 16°C
- Relative Humidity between 70% and 80%
- Air flow to be controlled should be no greater than 1.5ms⁻¹ in order to ensure that drying is gradual. Air flow above this speed can lead to the surface becoming hard and impervious to evaporation

The time from the start of curing to the end of the air-drying phase shall not be less than 10 months; this is to ensure that the meat is dried sufficiently and that the flavours of the ham are fully developed. If the individual legs are very large it may take longer than 10 months to dry sufficiently, in which case this time can be extended as required (see requirement for maximum Water Activity in 'Description' above). It is not possible to define the exact time that it takes for a piece of meat to dry as this dependant on many factors including: temperature, relative humidity, air flow, fat covering on the piece of meat, intra-muscular fat within the meat. Producers will need to determine when the piece of meat has dried sufficiently and will then need to check the Water Activity to ensure that it is no higher than 0.85; above this level the meat will not be safe to store at ambient temperature.

The ham may either be sold as a whole piece or sliced and ready to eat.

6. Link with the geographical area

The "New Forest Pannage Ham" application is based on the qualities and characteristics of the product which stem from the air drying of the ham, which preserves and accentuates the nutty and buttery flavour profile of the pannage pork.

The New Forest was founded by the William the Conqueror in 1079 as a royal hunting forest, the predominant native trees being Oak and Beech.

Whilst some of the oak and beech trees in the New Forest are ancient, many of the bigger oak trees were felled in the 17th and 18th century for building Royal Navy ships, with new trees planted in the early 19th century. The temperate maritime climate enjoyed in southern England is excellent for the production of slow-grown oak and large volumes of acorns are dropped in the autumn.

Turning pigs out into the forest to forage for 'mast' (acorns, beech mast, chestnuts, etc.) has been practiced as long as pigs have been domesticated. In Britain, there are texts suggesting that Commoners were guarding their pannage swine with "fierce dogs" on the Weald in southern England during Celtic times, as early as 30 CE, the season apparently running from the end of August until the middle of January. When the Anglo-Saxons arrived, they referred to the practice of turning pigs out for mast as *denberis*, the plural *denbera* meaning "a wood for pigs". When the Normans conquered England in the 11th century, the practice became known as "pannage"; the word believed to be derived from the old French *pasnage*, meaning to pay a landlord for the right to feed swine. In other words, during the Medieval period, the right to turn swine out onto the forest became known by the name given to the payment made by the commoners, rather than the feeding system itself, as it had been under Anglo-Saxon rule.

In many ways, it is due to the Normans that it is understood how pannage was implemented in England. Some Common Rights - the collection of firewood is a prime example - were available to everyone and weren't worth the time and effort to record. Acorns and beech nuts, however, remained the property of the landowner, and consequently there are many legislative and financial records covering what amounted to their sale to Commoners. In the Domesday Book of 1086, for example, pannage was listed as *de herbagio*, suggesting it was of economic importance to Commoners. Indeed, woods were carefully surveyed and often categorised according to the number of swine they could support – "one-hog groves", "ten-hog woodlands", "hundred-hog woods", etc. Certainly, during the Medieval period, pannage was seen as a quick method of fattening up pigs for slaughter, and reasonable returns could be made from relatively small outlays. Writing in 1883, George Briscoe Eyre, the owner of the Bramshaw Estate in the New Forest, explained that the value of pannage to a Commoner varied with both the quality of the mast year (i.e., how much mast fell) and the capital available for buying in as many pigs "early and cheap" as possible:

"In a good mast year, £5 thus laid out may be doubled in three months ... cottagers have been known to make £20 a year by their pigs."

Residents of the New Forest were granted a number of rights to graze their animals in the Forest; these included Common of Pasture (the right to turn out cattle, ponies, donkeys, and mules to graze), and Common of Mast which is the right to turn out pigs in the Forest during the Pannage season. The Pannage season in the New Forest is a period of not less than 60 days, fixed by the Forestry Commission after consultation with the Verderers. Before the 1964 New Forest Act, the Pannage season was fixed at 25th September to 22nd November. The Pannage season is often extended depending on the volume of acorns and beech mast produced each year.

There are two important reasons for the Right of Common of Mast to exist:

(a) Pannage is an important part of the New Forest's ecology - the pigs eat green acorns and beech mast which are poisonous to cattle and ponies. For example, the total number of fatalities of ponies and cattle due to eating acorns was as follows:

- 2006 - 47

- 2010 – 32
- 2013 – 51
- 2014 - 90

(b)Pannage is an ancient practice to fatten pigs before slaughter with food that is essentially free.

The practice of Pannage used to be commonplace throughout the UK but is now only continued in the New Forest. In the 19th century, up to 5,000-6,000 pigs were turned out; currently the numbers are in hundreds - it is a declining Right.

The natural behaviour of the pigs is very conducive to releasing them into the forest for Pannage. The pigs are simply 'turned out' into the forest each morning and they go out foraging for the acorns and mast. As evening approaches, the pigs return to their housing; they do not stay out all night, preferring the 'comforts' of their own bed. They forage for the acorns and mast nearest to their housing each day but as they consume the acorns they naturally forage further afield and have been known to travel a few miles away from the farm; always returning each evening.

Salting of pannage pork has been carried out in this country and in the designated geographical area for centuries as it was essential to preserve meat after it had been slaughtered; it not being practicable to eat all the meat within a few days of slaughter. It was also not practicable to keep pigs (other than breeding stock) through the winter because the food that would be fed to the pigs was needed by the human population. Salted pork was stored in barrels or was dried in the chimneys of houses to make hams and bacon.

New Forest Pannage Ham continues this ancient tradition of making hams in the designated geographical area but in such a way as to highlight the qualities of the meat by using lower levels of salt than in previous centuries and air-drying which was not available in the UK prior to the development of climate-controlled maturing facilities.

New Forest Pannage Ham received the following comment from the 2021 Great Taste judges "*Excellent example of cured pannage pork. The fat has a rich colour associated with a free-range animal foraging its food. The meat is rich, sweet and with hints of tannin. Well cured meat with salt levels spot on*" and "*A great ratio of fat that releases melt in the mouth texture and fabulous tasting meat, sweet, savoury, rich with umami notes with the pork coming to the fore - totally delicious and very well made which keeps you going back for another slice*"

7. Inspection body

Name: Dorset Council Trading Standards

Address: County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XJ

Telephone: 01305 225063

Email: tradingstandards@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

The inspection body conforms to the principles of ISO 17065 standard.

8. Labelling

ENDS

Appendix A

Certificate of Conformance for production and sale of New Forest Pannage Pork for production of New Forest Pannage Ham

Name of farm	
Address of farm	
Number of legs of Pannage Pork	
Date of slaughter of pigs	
Abattoir where pigs were slaughtered	
I confirm that the pigs related to this transaction were released into the New Forest during the Pannage season	Yes / No
That the requisite Marking Fee was paid and that I have a record of this available if required	Yes / No
I confirm that the pigs related to this transaction were slaughtered within 8 weeks of the end of the Pannage Season	Yes / No
Signed	
Date	