

„სულგუნი/SULGUNI“

Registered in Georgia as a Geographical Indication,
Registration № 10, Registration date: 24/01/2012¹

PRODUCT NAME FOR WHICH THE REGISTRATION OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION IS REQUESTED

PRODUCT TYPE: Food

PRODUCT CATEGORY: 1.3. Cheeses

NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE APPLICANT:

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE OF GEORGIA

NAME: „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRODUCT:

„სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ cheese is produced from cow, buffalo or goat milk or a mix of thereof; „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ is stretched-curd cheese (better known under “pasta filata” type), that is produced from cow, buffalo or goat milk or a mix of thereof. It can be fresh, dried, aged, smoked. „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ can be mixed with other ingredients (e.g. mint, tarragon, savoury and other herbs or spices, also, Adjika, honey, wine and chacha, hazelnut, walnut, almond).

ORGANOLEPTIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Shape

Usually, „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ presented to consumers has the form of a low cylinder, without crust, with a mass of 0.25-2.2 kg, a diameter of 7-30 cm and a height of 2-7 cm.

„სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ may also be presented to consumers sliced or into various forms, among them:

- Spherical shape with a knot on the top
- Braids
- Strings,
- Sticks,

¹ The list of Georgian AOs and GIs - https://www.sakpatenti.gov.ge/en/state_registry

- Plates,
- Any other shape (animal, bird, etc.).

Colour:

Inside and outside colour of „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ made from cow milk has a uniform colour from ivory to light yellow.

Inside and outside colour of „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ made from buffalo milk is white to ivory colour.

Outside colour of smoked „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ is golden-brown, while the inside has a yellowish colour.

If ingredients such as herbs, wine are used during making and/or aging of „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“, it may take the colour characteristic to these ingredients.

Texture:

„სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ has dense and elastic mass and is layered. „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ has the layers that are easily detachable. The surface of „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ is smooth, it should not be granular. „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ should not provide in mouth an unctuous feeling. „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ is free of holes, but interstices between layers are admitted.

Fresh „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ must be juicy and layers easily detachable. Liquid between layers should be dripping when the cheese is cut in half.

Smell:

„სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ has an appetizing smell of fresh milk and creamy aromas.

The smell of smoked „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ is characterised by the smell of smoke, without fully covering the aromas encountered in the non-smoked Sulguni.

In case of adding ingredients, „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ takes the smell of the ingredient.

Taste:

The taste of „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ is pure, milky/creamy, typical for the cultured milk product. It should be moderately salty. It shall not have the taste of rennet or other uncharacteristic taste.

Smoked „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ is moderately but slightly saltier than the non-smoked „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“, with aroma of the smoked product. In case of adding ingredients, „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ also takes the taste of the ingredient.

Physicochemical properties

The **fat content** in the dry matter for the different types of Sulguni:

- not less 30% for “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ made from cow milk
- not less 45% for “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ made from buffalo milk
- not less 40% for “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ made from mix (buffalo and cow) milk
- not less 40% for “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ made from mix (cow and goat) milk
- not less 45% for smoked Sulguni

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OF PRODUCTION:

The area of production of “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ PGI is the whole territory of Georgia. The milk used for the production of “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ PGI should originate from Georgia.

PRODUCTION METHODS:

Milk characteristics

“სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ is made from raw or pasteurized, whole or normalized milk. The use of milk powder is not permitted.

“სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ Classic is produced using morning and/or evening fresh raw whole milk.

“სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ Classic can be made manually.

Curding

The curding is obtained by introduction of animal or microbial rennet in the milk heated at a temperature of 32°- 39°C. To obtain this temperature, the milk can be heated. When the curd is firm, it is ready for discarding.

The use of lacto-bacterial starter is not allowed for “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ Classic.

Discarding

The curd is cut with a cheese harp or with hands until granules reach the size between a hazelnut and a walnut, then left between 5 to 20 minutes, before to extract the whey.

Whey-off and maturation of the curd

The curd is then poured in a tank or in vessels that allow the draining of the whey. After draining the whey, the curd is left in a vessel or reservoir for fermentation between 2 to 24 hours. Duration of fermentation depends on the temperature and the eventual use of lacto-bacterial starter.

In case of “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ Classic, a minimum of 5 hours is required.

The curd is ready for the next steps when the curd starts having small openings equally distributed on the entire curd section, but before that these opening increase in size and that the mass becomes too acid.

Kneading and moulding the “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ cheese

The curd is then cut into thin layers, and placed in a very hot but not boiling water. It is stirred in water until it becomes uniformly stretching paste mass. The use of wooden spoon is permitted.

Then, the formation of the cheese must be done by kneading the mass, and folding it several times (not less four times), before forming a spherical or other desirable shape that is cooled down with cold water - salted or not - or with the remaining whey.

In case of “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ Classic, the kneading must be manual.

The cheese is then ready for salting process.

Salting

The salting can be done either by direct application of dry salt on the surface of the cheese or by soaking the cheese in brine:

- Direct salting: after direct application of dry salt on the surface, the cheese is stored between 24 and 72 hours before being ready for consumption.
- Salt is applied on the upper side of the cheese in case of “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ Classic.
- Brine: The cheese is put to soak in brine with a concentration of 14-22% salt for 6 to 24 hours.

The sale of “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ is permitted after 24 hours from the start of salting process.

The producer is responsible for defining the shelf-life of the product.

Drying

After salting, “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ can be stored in a dry and ventilated place to be dried for several days or weeks. Use of wooden shelves is permitted. After drying, “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ should be delivered to the final consumer under the name: “Dried Sulguni”, “Dried “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ Classic”.

Smoking

After salting, fresh or dried “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ can be smoked in a smoking chamber by burning non-coniferous - e.g., pear, apple, alder, beech or quince wood or sawdust.

Cold and hot smoking methods are allowed:

- When applying hot smoking method, the process lasts between 1 to 12 hours.
- When applying cold smoking method, the process lasts between 72 hours and one week.

After smoking, “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ can be delivered to the final consumer under the name - “smoked Sulguni”.

Addition of ingredients

Different ingredients can be added during the kneading of the “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ or after the completion of the cheese making. All ingredients must be of Georgian origin.

The ingredients allowed are:

- Mint, tarragon, savoury and other herbs or spices
- Adjika
- Honey
- Wine and chacha
- Hazelnut, walnut, almond.

Evidence that the product originates in the defined geographical area (traceability system)

a. Registration of the operators

Each business-operator involved in one or more steps of the manufacturing process of “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ may log in to PGI “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ producer’s organization. PGI “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ producers’ organization possesses a list of registered persons with the right to use the protected geographical indication – „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“, defined by the legislation of Georgia. The requisites of business operators - title, address, identification code, contact information should be registered in the list. The list is subject to regular updates.

b. Traceability criteria

All stages of milking, cheese-making, ripening, cutting and packaging are performed inside, in the designated area, controlled and monitored conditions to ensure consistency in the quality and peculiarity of the product.

Traceability of the product must be ensured at the stages of milking, cheese-making, ripening, cutting, packaging and distribution of cheese.

To ensure traceability, every business operator connected to any stage of “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ PGI production process (milk producer, cheese producer, cheese cutter, packager) must keep relevant information related to the stages of production, processing and distribution of the product, any ingredient used in it, including packaging material, and maintain relevant documents and records, which enable the assessment of compliance with the requirements of milk and cheese origin, specifications and conditions of production and which will be submitted to the state control body upon request.

The traceability system is coordinated by “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ PGI organization, which defines the label to be accompanied to the product.

The link between a given quality, the reputation or other characteristic of the product and the geographical origin Reputation

The Protection of “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ as a PGI is mainly based on its reputation of the product of Georgian origin. The earliest written prove that cheese named Suluguni or Suldguni was produced in Georgia – namely Samegrelo and Svaneti, is in an Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language from XVII century by Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani, and next in another Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language by David Chubinishvili (XIX century). It is described as a stretch-curd kneaded flat cheese.

In the scientific study by Roland Topchishvili “From the history of Georgians’ eating culture – Suluguni” [Topchishvili, 2014], we can find the documental evidences of origin of this product. Here are some important data:

“In 1890s, due to high nutritional quality, Suluguni was imported overseas from the Poti Sea Port [Gugushvili, 1950; 94]. According to ethnographic data, it was made in historical-ethnical parts of the West of Georgia – Samegrelo, Svaneti, Imereti, Lechkhumi and Racha. In Samegrelo “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ was called “Selegini”, “Seleguni”, “Siogini”, and in Zemo (Upper) Imereti, Racha and Lechkhumi it was called “Gvajilla” or “Gvajilli [Topuria 1964; 46, 51; Ghlonti, 1974; 52]. In Guria region “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ was called “double-kneaded” (“Gadazelili”).

It should be cooked even twice: “the experience shows that cooking twice is critical. If it is not cooked twice, then melted butter will cover Suluguni and prevent absorption of salt. After cheese is taken out it is shaped by hand on the tray called “churukhi”; with both hands sour cream is separated from cheese” [Topuria, 1964: 49-50]. “In order to store Suluguni for long, it was holed on one side and several such cheeses were banded in a way that they did not touch each other. Then banded rolls were hanged on

the ceiling near fireplace or in the sun. Smoked and dried Suluguni could be stored for long” [Topuria, 1964:50]...

According to an article from the Ivane Javakhishvili Institute of History and Ethnography “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ is represented in various rituals known in Svaneti and Samegrelo that proves that this type of cheese was traditional to this area, because usually in rituals only traditional elements are present.

In the Soviet period, during 80-ies of XX century, an industrial production of “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ took place in almost all regions of Georgia and “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ and its reputation as a Georgian product was known through Soviet Bloc. **Human factors**

The culture of “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ production comes from west Georgia – Samegrelo and Svaneti, Traditional know-how has been transmitted from generation to generation and has spread to other regions in Georgia.

... Due to high humidity in Colchis lowlands storage of animal products was problematic. Because of limited number of cattle and lactation decrease from late autumn till early spring, people were short of milk and dairy products. To overcome this deficit people were seeking new techniques of producing dairy products, specifically cheese; “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ is an achievement made by Georgian farmers after extensive observation and creative thinking process...

As an ethnographer from Tbilisi - A. Kalantari notes, “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ seems to be introduced in Guria, Abkhazia, Imereti, Kobuleti and other places by Megrelian herders & cattle breeders.

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE END PRODUCT PACKAGING AND LABELING:

Packaging

“სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ placed on the market can be delivered to the final consumer whole or sliced, non-packed or packed. Packaging should not damage cheese texture.

Labelling

The information about the marketed whole “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ or piece of cheese with the registered PGI, must be delivered to the consumer in accordance with the requirements of “Delivery of Information to consumer about food products” established by the legislation of Georgia. In addition:

- the name "Sulguni" or "სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ Classic" on the whole or sliced cheese must be followed by the mention "Protected Geographical Indication" and state quality mark for PGI, use of which is regulated by Georgian legislation.
- the additional mentions “Fresh”, "Dried", Aged” or "Smoked" must precede or follow immediately the name "Sulguni" or "სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ Classic”;

- logos for “Sulguni” and “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ Classic” defined by the PGI Association, application of which is voluntary, as shown below

PGI logos defined by the “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ PGI Association:

”სულგუნი/SULGUNI“

”სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ Classic



VIII. Control bodies

The control over the compliance of PGI “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ with the specification and its production characteristics is carried out in accordance with the Georgian legislation through :

- self-control by the producers of PGI „სულგუნი/SULGUNI“;
- internal control exercised by PGI “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ organization, which is entitled to assess the compliance of production process with the requirements of PGI “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ specifications at the place of production, to assess the compliance of organoleptic characteristics of the product with requirements of PGI “სულგუნი/SULGUNI“ specifications, as well as control of traceability records, documents and other relevant information and to assist business operator in implementation of the State control.
- State control or external control carried out by the competent body - National Food Agency, Marshal Gelovani str. # 6, Tbilisi 0159, Georgia, or controlling body - a legal entity that has been delegated by the competent authority to perform a specific task related to state control and is accredited by the relevant body of Georgia or the Member States of the European Union and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).