

Protected food, drink or agricultural product name

Product specification for Beacon Fell Traditional Lancashire Cheese

A protected designation of origin (PDO)

Responsible country: Great Britain

This document sets out the elements of the product specification for information purposes.

Competent authority

Name: G.I. Team, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Address: Defra

SW Area

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Seacole Building

2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

Telephone:

Email: ukgiapplications@defra.gov.uk

Applicant group

Name: The Lancashire Cheesemakers Ltd

Address: C/O Dewlay Cheesemakers Ltd. Garstang Bypass Road, Garstang, Preston,
Lancashire. PR3 0PR

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Fax:

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Composition: Producers

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

Class 1.3 Cheeses

1. Product name(s)

Beacon Fell Traditional Lancashire Cheese

2. Description

Beacon Fell Traditional Lancashire Cheese is made from full fat cow's milk. It contains a minimum of 48% butter fat in the moisture free substance and a maximum moisture of 48%. The cheese is made in traditional cylindrical form.

Flavour: In a young cheese, clean and mellow. In a mature cheese, quite sharp and tangy

Colour: Uniform cream throughout

Body: Moderately firm, smooth and silky

Texture: Loose and open with a buttery feel, the mature version being reasonably spreadable

Finish and appearance: Either a traditional cylindrical shape or portions thereof (in varying sizes to suit the needs of the customer) or in a block form (again in varying sizes to suit the needs of the customer) It will be either bandaged, waxed, buttered or vacuum packed

3. Geographical area

Milk used for the production of Beacon Fell Traditional Lancashire Cheese will be sourced from the County of Lancashire. Furthermore, the cheese will also be produced within the county. The county of Lancashire is defined as the ceremonial county of Lancashire, which is the non-metropolitan county of Lancashire as created by the Local Government Act 1972, as well as the unitary authorities of Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen.

4. Method of production

The cheese is made throughout the year from full fat cows milk collected from farms in the designated area and delivered daily. The milk is tested by the dairy laboratory and stored in bulk silos:-

- . i: The milk is fed into a cheese making vat and levels of starter culture added. The milk is slowly stirred before rennet is then added.
- . ii: The curd is cut when a clean break can be achieved; curd should be cut to approximately the size of a broad bean.
- . iii: When the acidity of the curd is deemed to be at the right level the curds are allowed to settle.
- . iv: On cheesemaking tables the curd is broken at regular intervals and the whey drained off. This process is repeated until the right acidity has been reached according to the cheesemaker's recipe.
- . v: Some curds are held for 24 to 48 hours at an ambient temperature.
- . vi: The following day, new curd is mixed at the milling and salting stage with approximately equal portions of 24 hour and 48-hour curd or just with 24-hour curd. The curd is finely milled and mixed thoroughly, salt is added at approximately 2.5% of curd by weight; the correct blending of the curd is crucial to achieve the required flavour and texture.
- . vii: The cheese is lightly pressed to form the final shape. It is then bandaged, waxed, buttered or placed into food grade packaging.
- . viii: The cheese is then moved into a temperature-controlled store for maturing where they are held for a minimum period of 3-4 weeks. After which the cheese is removed from the store when required for marketing as mild (creamy) or mature (tasty) cheese. The cheese is fully mature at about six months but is sold from 1 month onwards depending on personal preference.

5. Link with the geographical area

It was during the reign of Henry II in 1179 AD Preston was awarded its first Royal Charter for fairs and markets, at which much cheese produced on farms of North Lancashire was sold. Records show that Traditional Lancashire was first manufactured on the farms of the Fylde, North of the River Ribble. In 1932 in response to a petition from the Chief Cheese Makers of the Fylde, Preston Town Council decided to hold four Cheese Fairs per annum.

However, production was varied up until the late 1800s and, therefore, the product was not consistent. It was about this time that Joseph Gornall of Garstang was commissioned by Lancashire County Council to tour Lancashire farms to teach the farmers a standard method of production. This he did, and also wrote several books on the subject. Mr Gornall's methods were closely followed in the Agriculture Ministry's Handbook on Cheesemaking in 1956 and true Traditional Lancashire is still manufactured in the same way today, with the exception of minor alterations brought about by improved technology. Traditional Lancashire Cheese is seeing a moderate revival, but, over the last 50 years, for various reasons, it almost 'died out'.

Before the war years there were over 200 farms and a few creameries producing c.4800 tonnes per annum: today there are only five farms and six creameries producing 1650 tonnes per annum. The first blow was the second world war. Production was banned in favour of hard cheese, as hard cheese could be cut into ration portions more easily. The cheese never really recovered, and in 1948 there were only 22 farms manufacturing same.

The second blow came in the 60s and 70s with the development of an 'imitation' Lancashire. This was very much welcomed by the larger manufacturers as it could be mass produced in a 'production line' or flow system, whereas Traditional Lancashire could not. The larger companies could afford to manufacture and name Lancashire to this imitation variety; a characterless white, acid and crumbly textured cheese, which has debased the qualities of a creamy Traditional Lancashire. Because the Lancashire Cheese Makers Association did not realise the threat this poor-quality product could have to its own product, it did nothing to prevent this happening and is therefore not entirely blameless. Thankfully several manufacturers persevered, and the true Lancashire cheese may yet to be restored to its former glory, and beyond.

The Lancashire Cheese Association was formed in the early 1900s and was once a large organisation with 30 or 40 members. Precise records are not available. The war years and following shortages of both labour and resources debilitated this and now there are just 6 members with another 5 manufacturers in the Farmhouse scheme.

The true product is not currently manufactured outside out designated area, and according to the knowledge of our members never has been.

The method and skill that we use have been passed down through generation after generation and all closely follows the teaching of Joseph Gornall.

The Association is committed to promote Traditional Lancashire but requires that its tradition be protected so as to ensure that imitations cannot debase its name and degenerate its levels of quality once again.

Traditional Lancashire Cheese has been exclusively produced in the Fylde, North Preston and Garstang areas for generations.

The buttery texture and mellowness of the cheese is attributable to the sandstone bedrock of this part of Lancashire and thus its soft water and lush grazing.

This area also has a moderate climate due to its proximity to the coast and the “Gulf Stream”; there are no extremes of temperature and therefore the fat constituents of the milk are relatively consistent.

The prevailing westerly winds also give the designated area relatively high rainfall which adds to the lushness of the grazing and the cleanliness of the grass ie low amounts of dust and therefore coiform bacteria.

The area of Lancashire is a traditional dairying area as it has one of the most consistently moderate climates in Europe. The high annual rainfall (1450mm) guarantees fresh and dust free grazing and forage which enables the cows to maintain the same feed levels all year round. This produces a consistent supply of milk with a soft fat constituent.

Added to the above are the traditional skills which have been carefully preserved by the dedicated cheesemakers in the area, skills which differ widely from other cheesemaking methods and are not used outside our designated area.

Traditional methods of production are used, to protect the delicate curd which must be correctly handled to produce the necessary flavour and texture by ensuring that the fat is not broken out nor lost in the whey. The master cheesemakers’ experience determines the correct time for each stage of the process. The slow production time of Beacon Fell Traditional Lancashire Cheese ensures that the particular micro-organisms present in the dairy’s concerned are absorbed and allowed to input the necessary flavour characteristics for this cheese.

For the above reasons we think that this area should be the designated area for the production of Traditional Lancashire Cheese and also for production of milk for the said cheese.

7. Inspection body

Name: Lancashire County Council Trading Standards.

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Fax:

Email: enquiries@lancashire.gov.uk

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

8. Labelling

N/A

ENDS

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