

Summary of Specification



1. Name of the GI + transcription in Latin alphabet or in international phonetic alphabet
十勝ラクレット (Transcription: Tokachi Raclette), Tokachi Raclette

2. Category of the product for which the name is protected

Class 6: Processed livestock product (Cheese)

3. Applicant – name and address

Tokachi Hinshitsunokai (Tokachi Quality Control Association)

6-4-12 Jiyugaoka, Obihiro City, Hokkaido, 080-2476, Japan

4. Date of first protection in the country of origin

5. Description of product

Tokachi Raclette is a pressed, semi-hard type natural cheese made from fresh raw milk produced in Tokachi region of Hokkaido, one of the leading dairy farming regions in Japan.

During the ripening period, the surface of the cheese is carefully polished with salted water so that *Brevibacterium linens* (hereinafter referred to as “the Bacteria”) can fully develop, giving the cheese a ripe, mellow aroma like nuts and/or hay and a fresh milk flavour. Compared to Raclette made in Europe, the unique pungent odour is suppressed and its distinctive feature, the refreshing taste, suits the Japanese taste.

In addition, Tokachi Raclette, produced by several cheesemakers in the Tokachi region, has won various awards at various national and international contests, e.g., Grand Prize at the 1st ALL JAPAN Natural Cheese Contest in 1998 and Second Prize in the category of semi-hard type at World Championship Cheese Contest (USA) in 2010, and is also highly regarded by consumers.

6. Description/delimitation of the geographical area and of specific steps in production that must take place in the identified geographic area

(1) Producing area:

Obihiro City, Otofuke Town, Shihoro Town, Kamishihoro Town, Shikaoi Town in Kato County, Shintoku Town, Shimizu Town in Kamikawa County, Memuro Town Nakasatsunai Village, Sarabetsu Village in Kasai County, Taiki Town, Hiroo Town in Hiroo County, Makubetsu Town, Ikeda Town, Tokoyoro Town, Honbetsu Town in Nakagawa County, Ashoro Town, Rikubetsu Town in Ashoro County, and Urahoro Town in Tokachi County, Hokkaido

(2) Production method

① Ingredients

- i) Raw milk produced on farms in the Tokachi region is used as raw milk.
- ii) Animal-derived rennet (milk-coagulating enzyme) is used.

② Production method

Based on the process of cheesemaking, the following process controls must be implemented:

- i) Water taken from the Tokachi region is added to the milk to make the lactose concentration lower.
- ii) For the polishing/washing process during the maturing period, a polishing/washing solution containing salt and the Bacteria dissolved in water taken from the Tokachi region is used.
- iii) The maturing period shall be at least 8 weeks, adjusted according to the temperature and humidity of the maturing room and the degree of polishing/washing.

③ Shipping standards

- i) The size of the product shall be about 7 cm in height and 26 cm to 30 cm in diameter before cutting, in a cylindrical shape.
- ii) The acidification (pH), which increases during maturing, should be at least pH 5.2.
- iii) The salt content should be about 1.8%.

7 Link with the Geographical Area

The Tokachi region of Hokkaido, where Tokachi Raclette is produced, is not suitable for rice cultivation due to its cool climate and small amount of snowfall, however, much of the land is covered with well-drained andosol (charcoal fracture soil) derived from volcanic ash, which has long been used for cultivating beans such as soybeans, azuki beans, potatoes. As good quality fodder crops such as corn can also be harvested, dairy farming operations that can make use of the vast area of farmland have taken root in the region, and the region now boasts the highest number of dairy cattle farm units, number of cows kept and milk production on

consignment in Japan.

In addition, the Tokachi region has been involved in the processing of dairy products, even when refrigeration facilities were not widespread due to the cool climate, and many major dairy companies' cheese factories were founded in the region.

In 1979, it was decided to implement the planned production of raw milk for the first time in order to stabilised milk prices, etc. In the Tokachi region, the disposal of raw milk due to overproduction was implemented twice, in 1979 and 1986, which led to a growing momentum to process and consume raw milk in the region, which has led to handmade yoghurt and cheese making workshops and events aimed at increasing consumption.

Around 1984, there was a growing trend among dairy farmers in the Tokachi region towards integrated production and value-added sales of cheese made from fresh, home-produced raw milk and suited to the local climate and conditions, in order to increase profits. In 1990, Jean Hueber, then-President of French AOC Cheese Association, was invited to give a lecture and trainings on the current state of geographical indications in France and on cheese-making techniques rooted in local weather and food culture. In 1991, cheese producers established the "Tokachi Natural Cheese Promotion Association" with the aim of promoting production, and frequently sent cheesemakers to France to learn cheese production, including Raclette. The cheese producers have worked together and engaged in friendly competition to produce cheese with regional own identity.

The name 'Raclette' is said to derive from the French word 'racler', meaning 'to shave', and its general characteristics are expressed by controlling the lactose concentration before pressing by adding water to avoid over-maturing, and by polishing the surface with brine and the Bacteria during the maturing process. However, in the French production method, the aroma and flavour of the Bacteria are strongly revealed due to the hard water (water containing many minerals) used for adding water and polishing, and it was considered not to be preferred by the Japanese palate.

However, the Tokachi raclette is produced using high-quality soft water from the Tokachi region and standardised production methods, such as the addition of water and the polishing process, which suppress the development of a distinctive aroma and reduce excessive maturation, enabling the production of a unique Raclette with a mild taste and gentle flavour to suit Japanese tastes.

8 History / confirmations of on-going production

In 1992, the first Raclette was introduced to the market by the Kyodo Gakusha Shintoku Farm situated in Shintoku Town, and in 1993, Ikeda Cheese Association was established in Ikeda Town to eat natural cheese including Raclette more, and thus local awareness of the cheese has increased and Raclette was widely spread in the Tokachi region. Besides the standard/traditional dish of Rackette heating, scraping off the soft melted part and eating it

over boiled potatoes and other hot vegetables or on bread, various other ways of eating Raclette have been proposed, and have helped to form a new food culture favoured in the Tokachi region, where the outside temperature is low.

Furthermore, the Cheese section of Tokachi Quality Control Association, organised by cheesemakers, brings in Tokachi Raclette produced at each farm once a year and mutually checks the quality using a sensory evaluation chart, in an effort to maintain and improve the characteristics and quality of the Tokachi Raclette. As of 2018, there are eight farms/studios that stably produce and sell Tokachi Raclette, and while observing the stipulated production process. The production volume has increased from 120 pieces in 1992 to approximately 72,000 pieces in 2018.

9 Specific rules concerning labelling and using, if any

N/A

10 Control body / control authority responsible for checking the respect of the product specifications

Control body is Tokachi Quality Control Association.

In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries monitors the condition of quality control in the process of production.

11 Outline of the quality control plan

Tokachi Quality Control Association (hereinafter referred to as “the Association”) will check (1) producing area and (2) production method, etc. If a producer in the group fails to abide by the specification, the Association will issue a warning and request a correction of his/her production. In case the producer does not follow the warning, the Association may prohibit the shipment of the product using the geographic indication, “Tokachi Raclette”, and GI mark for a certain period.

In the event that a serious violation is found that significantly undermines or is likely to undermine the trust of consumers regarding the product, it shall be promptly reported to the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

12 Information of registered trademark(s) identical or similar to the GI (if applied by the GI holder in other Party’s territory)

N/A