

“CECINA DE LEÓN” PROTECTED GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION QUALITY SCHEME

(EFFECTIVE DATE: 12/12/2012)

PRODUCT CHARACTERISTICS

"Cecina de León" is a cured meat product, made from the muscle cuts known as **top side**, **thick flank**, **silverside** and **rump** from the hindquarters of bovine cattle; these cuts undergo a production process, for a minimum period of time of 7 months, consisting in salting, washing, settling and drying/curing.

«Cecina de León» has the following characteristics:

- Exterior appearance: certified pieces have a toasted, brown, slightly dark colour, as a result of the elaboration process.

- Colouration and appearance when cut: When cut, Cecina de León has a colour range varying from cherry to garnet red with more intense hues at the edges when the pieces are nearing the end of the curing process, and a slight degree of marbling which gives Cecina de León its characteristic juiciness.

- Weight: The minimum weight for each of the cured pieces and the muscles that make them up are:

- Top side: 4 Kg. Fleshy mass, conical in shape, although flat mediolaterally. It is formed by the thigh's medial muscles, specifically the sartorius, pectineus, gracilis, adductor, semimembranosus, quadriceps femoris and the extra-pelvic portion of the obturator externus muscle.

- Thick flank: 5 Kg. It is made up of two parts, the thick flank itself and the round, which has a slightly cylindrical triangular prism shape. The round is formed exclusively by the semitendinosus muscle and the thick flank by the gluteobiceps muscle.

- Silverside: 3.5 Kg. Ovoid-shaped piece, made up of the components of the quadriceps femoris (rectus femoris and vastus lateralis, intermedius and medialis).

- Rump: 3 Kg. Triangular in shape, it includes the gluteus medius, accessorius and profundus, as well as the gemelli muscles of the hip.

- Flavour and aroma: Cecina de León has a distinctive flavour; it is moderately salty and has a slightly fibrous consistency. The maturing pieces of Cecina de León are subjected to a smoking process which adds a characteristic aroma that enhances the set of flavours.

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

The geographical area for the production of "Cecina de León" includes solely and exclusively the province of León.

The geographical location of this province, in the north-west of the Iberian Peninsula, gives León its rich landscape diversity, from mountains and valleys to its fertile plateau.

Its average altitude, with its dry and healthy climate, constitutes an exceptional environment for the artisanal production of Cecina de León.

ELEMENTS TO CERTIFY THE PRODUCT IS ORIGINARY FROM THE AREA

The Cecina de León pieces will be identified and tagged at the beginning of the production process with the corresponding numbered blood control seals.

The control structure will supervise the production method carried out by the registered industries.

The control structure will verify compliance with current legislation applicable to cured or smoked meat products.

The control structure will verify the sensory characteristics of Cecina de León through a Tasting Committee.

ELABORATION PROCESS

Cecina de León's elaboration process entails the complete transformation of the muscular pieces.

Once the pieces, which can only come from authorised meat establishments (slaughterhouses and cutting plants) that have the required certifications up to date, are selected, a curing process consisting of six phases begins: shaping, salting, washing, settling, smoking and drying/curing.

A. Shaping: it gives the different pieces the required shape.

B. Salting: the purpose of salting is adding common salt to the muscle mass to cause the dehydration and perfect conservation of the meat, while contributing to the development of the typical colour and aroma of cured products. The salting process lasts for a minimum of 0.3 days to a maximum of 0.6 days per kg. of weight.

C. Washing: salted pieces are washed with lukewarm water to remove the adhered salt.

D. Settling: this phase's objective is to eliminate water, help salt penetrate the meat in a homogeneous and uniform manner, produce the characteristic microflora and channel the biochemical processes of enzymatic hydrolysis that will result in the characteristic aroma and flavour. As the surface water is gradually eliminated, the Cecina de León pieces acquire greater consistency. This phase lasts between 30 and 45 days.

E. Smoking: pieces are smoked using oak or holm oak firewood. The duration of this phase cannot exceed 16 days.

F. Drying or Curing: smoked pieces are classified according to weight and shape. This phase is carried out in drying rooms equipped with windows with adjustable openings that allow controlling both temperature and humidity through the traditional system of "opening and closing windows". Pieces will remain in these premises until they complete their maturation.

LINK TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Historical Accounts

The production area of the “Cecina de León” Protected Geographic Indication includes the entire municipalities of the province of León, which due to its orographic, climatic and human factors results in a product with distinctive and exceptional qualities.

Cured beef, or *cecina de vacuno*, dates back its origins to the primitive diet of Mankind itself. It embodies a food message of great relevance, due to its indigenous importance within the province.

Some historical accounts of cured beef meat are related below:

In Chapter 55 of his agricultural treatise, “De Re Rustica”, Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella (4 AD) already mentions *cecina* or cured beef.

In the “Tratado de Agricultura General” (1513), by Gabriel Alonso de Herrera, salted and cured meats occupy a prominent place, and in its XL chapter, he writes of the possibility of “cecinar” (curing) more types of meat, including beef.

Enrique Gil y Carrasco, born in 1815, poet and writer, reflects the customs of the Leonese province in his numerous reports and articles. In one of them, titled “El pastor trashumante” (Madrid, 1843), he recounts the life of shepherds, whom he calls “sons of the mountain”. In this article he recounts the farewells of shepherds to their families, to begin the journey with their Merino flocks down the Royal drover roads:

“For the next day, the shepherd's lunch box will be ready, consisting of a large supply of *cecina* and ham...”

In her collection “Tierras de León”, historian Patrocinio García Gutiérrez, points out in her analysis of marginalized population within Leonese society and the city's Orphanage and Hospice back in the XIX century, that *cecina*, among other foods, was already part of the established diet in both institutions.

When Luis Alonso Luengo, Official Chronicler of Astorga, while editing and expanding “Historia de la Muy Noble, Leal y Benemérita Ciudad de Astorga” (1909) by Matías Rodríguez Díez, previous Official Chronicler of the city, in the chapter where he describes the Maragato weddings, he says of the meals:

“Lunch must not be outdone by breakfast, turkeys, hens, chickens and other poultry, pay dearly for having let themselves be fattened up: chops, *cecina*, chorizos and beef; and a sea of slices of ham...”

Years later, in his book “Los Maragatos, su estirpe, sus modos”, Luis Alonso Luengo cites sources from Marqués de la Ensenada which register the number of muleteers, carts and males assigned to each Maragato town and others particularities of this industry:

“It was a system that worked perfectly. The journey began in the town of origin and from there to La Coruña, Madrid and other places in Spain, taking and bringing back goods, delivering city-to-city all kinds of merchandise, including *cecina de vacuno*.”

Félix María de Samaniego (1745-1801) uses the fable genre with great common sense. His fables have a fundamental didactic purpose and an overall moralising theme. In his fable VIII, “El ratón de la Corte y el Campo,” Samaniego also mentions *cecina*:

“Their senses would take pleasure there, the walls and ceilings were decorated with a thousand mousey sweets, sausages, hams and *cecinas*. They jumped for joy, oh what a pleasure! From ham to ham, from cheese to cheese...”

León, 1835-1839: In the section on the state of stocks, goods and fruits of all kinds, consumed in the City of León during the five-year period from 1835 to 1839, in a common year, and the proportion of consumption and payment for each inhabitant with expression of the sums accrued upon entry, both by gate fees or by municipal rules, *cecina* was listed among meats, clearly differentiated between fresh meats and hams.

Back then, the City of León consumed 4,800 *arrobas* of *cecina* in a five-year period and in a typical year, 972 *arrobas*; according to the statistics found in the Madoz Dictionary, the average consumption per inhabitant in a year was estimated at: “the quantities consumed per individual in a common year is 0.137 *arrobas*.”

In a five-year period, 9,005 *reales* were paid in taxes and gate fees. Thanks to these significant data, we know that the approximate price of a kilo of *cecina* sold in the Plaza Mayor in León and other markets, was 6.20 *reales*.

This documented information from the Madoz Dictionary prove the clear differentiation of *cecina* amongst other meats.

In the “Diccionario Enciclopédico de Ganadería e Industrias Rurales” (1885), directed by López Martínez Hidalgo Tablada and Prieto, distinguished and renowned agronomists describe, in several sections, the characteristics of Leonese cattle in the 19th century:

“Bovine cattle everywhere retain their strength, docility and the characteristic sobriety that allows them to be fed and fatten up at little cost. This breed provides large amounts of very tasty meat which is favoured by all social classes”

These renowned agronomists highlight the importance of Leonese cattle, due to their shape and products, so they literally affirm: “We must not overlook the cattle from the province of León”; “Leonese cattle can be fattened up easily and produce tender and tasty meats.”

Cecina de vacuno at the fairs and markets in León:

“Livestock wealth is quite considerable in the province of León. In the Leonese meadows graze many heads of cattle that, after being used for field work, because only in the southern part of the province farmers use mules for this kind of work, bovine cattle supply meat to the markets across the province of León, Valladolid and Palencia. Cows and calves are sold for *cecina* in the fairs of Los Santos and San Andrés de León and in those of San Martín de Mansilla.”

El Porvenir de León, “Periódico de intereses generales, noticias y anuncios” of January 30, 1886, publishes:

“It is prohibited, under penalty of confiscation, to introduce, into this city, dead meat destined for the public consumption. Pork carcasses, hams and giblets are excepted from this provision, as well as *cecinas*.”

José Francisco de la Isla de la Torre y Rojo (Vidanes, April 24, 1703) lives part of his youth in Valderas and at the age of sixteen he enters the Society of Jesus. He is soon known by “Padre Isla” and becomes a prominent figure in the Spanish Literature of the 18th century. Padre Isla’s works characterise by his liberal, satirical and ironic tone, and his masterpiece links him directly to the satires against the preachers of his time. The setting is Leonese. In his description of Antón Zotes, in the play “Fray Gerundio de Campazas”, Padre Isla gives us the first quote of the *Cecina de León*, remarking the quality and variety of the meals of such a unique character:

“Man of machorra. *Cecina* and bread in the middle of the ordinary days, with onion or leek for dessert; cow and chorizo on holidays. Your ordinary thick rashers of bacon for lunch and dinner...”

In Fray Gerundio's first sermon, Padre Isla recounts in detail the food offered in the meal:

“The meal began according to the custom of eating at steward tables, where there were: roasted lamb, rabbit, he sprinkled his pot of beef and mutton and in great abundance *cecina de vaca*, chorizo and ham...”

“La Pícaro Justina” is a work of great literary value and a faithful testimony of the rural Leonese society of the beginning of the 17th century. The story is set in a large part of the Leonese province and its capital. In Mansilla de las Mulas, the main character’s parents have an inn. Muleteers and travelers stay at their inn. Among the food sold there is no shortage of *cecina*, which is clearly mentioned aside from the rest of the meat products.

NATURAL

Orography

Owing to the fact that the Protected Geographical Indication extends over the entire province of León, there is a diversity of landscapes that ranges from mountains, valleys to the plateau. The characteristics of León’s orography do not only condition its agricultural and cattle raising activity, but the diet also adapts to the climatic conditions, allowing the production of dried and wind-cured meats, especially in the northern half of the province where the altitude is over 800 m above sea-level.

Climate

The average altitude of the province of León, due to its geographical location at the end of the Northern Plateau, with the Galician-Leonese Massif and the Cantabrian Mountain Range, is over 700m above sea-level, resulting in an extreme climate, with very cold and dry winters, and hot summers, with long periods of frost, which makes it ideal for the artisanal production of cured meat.

The rainfall levels reach their peak during the cold season and fall to their lowest in the summer.

ELABORATION SYSTEM

The production process and its different phases are detailed in the previous section
ELABORATION PROCESS

CONTROL STRUCTURE

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The Instituto Tecnológico Agrario de Castilla y León (Agrarian Technological Institute of Castilla y León), through their Subdirección de Calidad y Promoción Alimentaria, is the competent authority in charge of verifying compliance with the Quality Schemes, as well as the application of the sanctions regime included in Title III of the Law 24/2003, of July 10, of Vineyard and Wine.

LABELLING

Cecina de León pieces can be sold whole, wrapped or sheathed, or in vacuum-sealed portions or slices.

All packaging must carry labels with “Protected Geographical Indication” and “Cecina de León” displayed in a prominent manner. When the entire process of production lasts a

minimum duration of 12 months or longer, the label "Reserve" can be displayed on the packaging.

These labels will be placed in a way that does not allow to be re-used.

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

- Law 25/1970, of December 2, Statute of Vineyard, Wine and Alcohols.

- Royal Decree 1069/2007, of July 27, which regulates the procedure for processing applications for registration in the EU Registry of Protected Designations of Origin and Protected Geographical Indications and opposition to them.