

TECHNICAL FILE

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Geographical indication to be registered: Карловска гроздова ракия / Гроздова ракия от Карлово / Karlovska grozdova rakya / Grozdova rakya from Karlovo

Category of the spirit drink: Винена дестилатна спиртна напитка / Wine spirit

Description of the spirit drink:

'Karlovska grozdova rakya' is a wine spirit having a minimum alcoholic strength of 40 % vol., which:

- is obtained by single or double distillation at less than 65 % vol. of wine obtained from grapes, where a maximum of 75 litres of wine can be obtained from 100 kg of grapes; and
- by virtue of its composition and organoleptic properties, fully corresponds to the production requirements of a wine spirit.

— Physical, chemical and/or organoleptic characteristics:

- Clear, transparent liquid, not containing any impurities. Colour - colourless liquid (if the drink has not been matured) or pale to intense golden colour acquired as a result of maturing in oak barrels.
- Alcoholic strength at least 40 % vol.; methanol content not exceeding 20 g/hl of 100 % vol. alcohol; volatile substance content of at least 400 g/hl of 100 % vol. alcohol.
- 'Karlovska grozdova rakya' is characterised by a rich grape flavour, with hints of green apple and fig, typical of the grape varieties grown in the area.

Matured 'Karlovska grozdova rakya' is produced from a distillate that has been matured in barrels for six years. It has a rich aroma with light notes of brandy and a pale amber colour. It is suitable for drinking either as an aperitif or as a digestif. Its robust flavour and lingering after-taste are best experienced when the drink has warmed up slightly (to room temperature).

— Specific characteristics (compared to spirit drinks of the same category)

'Grozdova rakya from Karlovo' is produced from unfiltered wine, without marc, from the Misket cherven, Gewürztraminer, Chardonnay and Muscat varieties of grape. Misket cherven predominates, accounting for 50 % of the grapes, and the other 50 % is made up of a combination of Gewürztraminer, Chardonnay and Muscat; the percentages for these three varieties are not precisely defined and depend on the aromatic components of these varieties from the relevant harvest.

Distillation takes place until an alcoholic strength of 65 % vol. has been reached. Many years of experience have shown that, at this alcoholic strength, the wine distillate

has a unique taste, a wonderful aroma and potential for maturing and ageing. An 18 m high NM-72 copper continuous still is used for distillation. This is a Bulgarian-designed system intended for the distillation of wine in a continuous flow. It has tried-and-tested design, technological and operational advantages.

If it has not matured, 'Karlovska grozdova rakya' is drunk as an aperitif. It has a rich aroma of grapes, green apples and figs.

The unique aroma and flavour of matured 'Karlovska grozdova rakya' is created by using barrels of different types and sizes that are subjected to different methods of toasting, and by maintaining mandatory 'resting' periods when there is no contact with the wood prior to final blending (coupage). The barrels contain hints of old malt whisky and exquisite matured brandy, a bouquet of vanilla, tobacco and dark chocolate, and a whiff of roses.

Depending on the ageing period for 'Karlovska grozdova rakya', the distillate is matured in different types of barrels, as follows:

- 12 years - smoked Balkan oak barrels;
- 15 years - robinia wood barrels;
- 18 years - cherry wood barrels;
- 21 years - mulberry wood barrels;
- 25 years - Balkan oak barrels.

The maximum capacity of the barrels is 500 l.

Geographical area concerned

The geographical area in which 'Karlovska grozdova rakya' is produced is situated in central Bulgaria, in the northern part of the Karlovo Basin in Plovdiv Province. The area includes the municipalities of Karlovo and Sopot, located in the western part of the Sub-Balkan (Podbalkanski) / 'Rose Valley' (Rozova dolina) vine and wine region. The average altitude is 380 m above sea level. The climate is transitional continental, with a prominent mountain influence. It has a milder and warmer climate, compared with other sub-Balkan plains. The average annual temperature is 11.4 °C. Temperature inversion is rare. Winters are relatively mild, and the average temperature in January is between 0 and -1 -1° C. There is constant snow cover for 25-30 days per year. Summers are moderately warm and last for approximately 60 days with an average temperature of 20 ° C, with 15 or so days averaging 25 ° C. The maximum temperature in July ranges between 34° C and 36° C. The average relative humidity for the region is 70-73 % and the average annual rainfall is 653 mm/m².

Deluvial and alluvial meadow soils are the most widespread soil types (75 %), while cinnamon-brown forest soils are less common (10-12 %). Mountain meadow and brown forest soils are also found in the higher parts of the Balkan Mountains. The soils have a light mechanical composition with low humus content and are therefore suitable for growing white grape varieties.

The vineyards where the grapes used to produce 'Karlovska grozdova ' are grown are situated in the villages of Moskovets, Anevo, Karavelovo and Prolom. The total area planted with fruiting vines is 262 ha (two hundred sixty-two hectares).

Method for obtaining the spirit drink

• **Harvesting** – each grape variety is picked separately by hand and placed into special vessels;

• **Transport** – without packaging, in stainless steel containers of suitable design and capacity;

• **Grading** – the grapes are received in batches of a specific quantity and graded according to variety, general outward appearance and sugar content. Only healthy, well-ripened grapes are picked.

• **Processing** – the grapes are crushed in a grape crusher, separating the berries from the stems. After cooling, the grape pulp is fed into a pneumatic press to separate the must, which is collected in a tank and cooled to 14-16° C;

• **Fermentation method**

The cooled must is racked. It is then sent for fermentation in white wine fermenters. A pure wine yeast culture is added to it. The fermentation process is monitored with regard to sugar and alcohol content and temperature, which should not exceed 18^o C. The wine obtained after fermentation is racked and stored in reinforced concrete tanks in cellars;

- **Distillation method**

Distillation is continuous. A type NM-72 continuous still is used. The distillation process is controlled by regulating the flow of the input material, the steam pressure and the flow of water used to cool the water and alcohol vapours. Partial rectification takes place to increase the alcoholic strength of the distillate and the concentration of aromatic compounds and to remove unwanted impurities that do not lend themselves to boiling. This yields a clear distillate with good organoleptic characteristics. Distillation is stopped once an alcoholic strength of 65 % vol. has been obtained.

- **Storage method** - the finished distillate obtained is stored in metal tanks. If intended for matured 'Karlovka grozdova rakiya', the distillate is matured in barrels. The maximum capacity of the barrels is 500 l;

- **Processing method** – When blending the drink, distillates with different organoleptic characteristics are mixed and demineralised drinking water is added in an amount necessary to achieve an alcoholic strength of 40 % vol. The finished drink is then stored in appropriate vessels. It is bottled and bottling may take place outside the geographical area in which it is produced.

Link with the geographical environment or origin

— Details of the geographical area or origin relevant to the link

Distillation has been practised in the Rose Valley area since the 16th century, when production of Bulgarian rose oil, considered to be one of the world's finest, first started.

Viticulture and wine-making began to develop in the Karlovo region in the 19th century. In 1891, there were already several small family-run wineries. Some of them later joined together and registered as the 'Karlovski masket' vine and wine cooperative, which in 1927 was considered to be one of the most modern wineries in Bulgaria at the time.

Only 10 km away from Karlovo is the ancient Roman city of Diocletianopolis (Hisar), where numerous remains of wine amphorae and dishes with images of vines were found during archaeological excavations.

The area's natural features provide conditions in which vines flourish. The Rose Valley is protected to the north by the high ridges of the Balkan Mountains and the sunny slopes of the Sredna Gora range, and this contributes to its characteristic mild climate. The average annual air temperature is 11.4 °C. January is the coldest month and July the warmest. Autumns are warm and long. Average annual precipitation is 653 mm/m², which is significantly higher than the average for Bulgaria and ensures good soil moisture throughout the year. The soils have a light mechanical composition and a low humus content.

These factors, coupled with the gentle terrain dissected by the Stryama, Byala Reka and Stara Reka rivers, create favourable conditions for the cultivation of vines and the production of high-quality grapes.

— Specific characteristics of the spirit drink attributable to the geographical area

The characteristic climate of the Rose Valley is ideal for the cultivation of the white grape varieties Masket cherven, Gewürztraminer, Chardonnay and Muscat.

Masket cherven is an old autochthonous variety of wine grape. This variety thrives on the hilly and breezy terrains that are typical of the Rose Valley. It displays average growth, possesses high fertility and has an average yield. In terms of frost-resistance, it is the best-performing indigenous variety and also outperforms several foreign varieties

of wine grape. Misket is an aromatic variety. It is responsible for the rich green apple and fig tones in the taste of 'Karlovska grozdova rakya'.

It thrives on water-retaining soils such as those found in the Rose Valley. The composition of the soils in the basin is strongly influenced by the climate and the flows of the Stryama, Byala Reka and Stara Reka rivers. The Traminer is responsible for the dominant floral and exotic fruit notes that develop as 'Karlovska grozdova rakya' ages.

Chardonnay grapes thrive in the deeper, rich calcareous soils found at the foot of the hills in the Rose Valley. It provides the notes of vanilla, smoke and oak that are characteristic of 'Karlovska grozdova rakya'.

Muscat is an aromatic grape variety that is typical of the area. It lends the drink an intense flowery aroma, reminiscent of violets and rose-scented geranium.

The four varieties, Misket cherven, Gewürztraminer, Chardonnay and Muscat, combine to give 'Karlovska grozdova rakya' its specific organoleptic characteristics.

The oak forests of the Balkan Mountains and Sredna Gora range, the stands of robinia, mulberry trees and the fruit orchards have been key to the development of the cooper's craft in Karlovo and nearby settlements.

The southern flank of the Balkan Mountains is the source of sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*). Research has shown Bulgarian oak to be similar to French oak and to have a higher level of tannins than American oak.

Maturing in barrels made from Balkan oak, robinia wood, mulberry wood and cherry wood that has been toasted at different temperatures helps the drink achieve its typical golden colour and develop rich aromas of spices, vanilla, almond, chocolate, coffee, and its 'smokiness'.

The production technology has remained unchanged over the years, although the equipment has been modernised to speed up and ensure the smooth processing of the raw materials. 'Karlovska grozdova rakya' is regarded as a 'connoisseurs' drink'. Production averages 24 000 litres per year.

European Union or national/regional provisions

The specific requirements for the definition, description, labelling and presentation of the wine spirit 'Karlovska grozdova rakya' are laid down in the Wine and Spirit Drinks Act (ZVSN), promulgated in State Gazette (SG) No 45/2012 and in force since 16 September 2012:

According to Article 123 of the ZVSN, grape rakia:

is a wine spirit with a minimum alcoholic strength of 40 % vol., obtained by single or double distillation at less than 65 % vol. of wine obtained from grapes, where a maximum of 75 litres of wine can be obtained from 100 kg of grapes;

- contains a quantity of volatile substances equal to or exceeding 125 g/hl of 100 % vol. alcohol;

- has a maximum methanol content of 200 g/hl of 100 % vol. alcohol;

- has specific organoleptic properties.

By virtue of this definition and its physico-chemical properties, the term 'grape rakia' fully corresponds to the definition of wine spirit given in point 4 of Annex II 'Spirit drinks, Categories of spirit drinks' to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2008 on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of spirit drinks.

The national procedure for approving spirit drinks with a geographical indication is set out in Section VII 'Production of spirit drinks with a geographical indication' of Chapter Nine 'Spirit drinks' of the ZVSN. 'Grozdoва rakya from Karlovo' was approved as a geographical indication pursuant to Order No T-RD-27-19 of the Minister for the Economy and Energy of 27 November 2013, which has been published on the Ministry of the Economy's website at: <http://www.mi.government.bg/bg/library/zapoved-za-utvarjavanena-vinena-destilatna-spirtna-napitka-grozdoва-rakiya-s-geografsko-ukazanie-k-70-c28-m361-1.html>

Pursuant to Article 131(6) of the ZVSN, wine spirits may be placed on the market only if accompanied by a batch test report issued by an accredited laboratory, and a copy of a certificate of authenticity issued by the Regional Vine and Wine Chamber (RLVK).

Applicant

— Member State, third country or legal/natural person: **Bulgaria, Ministry of the Economy**

— Full address (street number and name, town/city and postal code, country):

ul. Slavyanska 8, 1052 Sofia, Bulgaria

— Legal status (in the case of legal persons) ...

Supplement to the geographical indication

Specific rules concerning labelling:

In accordance with the Wine and Spirit Drinks Act, when labelling spirit drinks produced in Bulgaria and intended for the Bulgarian market, the following details must be provided in Bulgarian:

1. the commercial name of the drink;
2. the nominal volume;
3. the 'e' mark, certifying that the quantity of the drink corresponds exactly to that indicated on the label;
4. the actual alcoholic strength of the drink;
5. the number and/or date of the batch preceded by the letter 'L';
6. the number of the technical specification of the drink;
7. the name (business name) and registered office of the producer;
8. the name (business name) and registered office of the bottling company, if the drink has been bottled or decanted into containers with a capacity of up to 60 litres;
9. the number of the producer's registration certificate;

The following optional information may be included when labelling a spirit drink:

1. name of the geographical area in which the drink was produced;
2. name of the fruit or fruits or name of the raw material from which the drink was produced;
4. recommended use of the drink;
5. medals and awards received;
6. maturing and ageing methods used;
7. method of production;
8. number of distillations;
9. information on the history of the drink and the producer;
10. information about persons involved in the marketing of the drink.

A geographical indication may be added after the commercial name of a spirit drink if the production phase, from the harvesting of the raw materials to when the spirit drink acquires its specific or final characteristics and properties, takes place in the specified geographical area.