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Geographical indication to be registered Loveshka slivova rakya/Slivova rakya from Lovech

Category of the spirit drink Плодова дестилатна спиртна напитка/Fruit spirit

Description of the spirit drink

'Loveshka slivova rakya' is a fruit spirit as defined in point 9 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.

'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit is produced exclusively by means of the alcoholic fermentation and distillation of pulp of plums (*Prunus domestica*) of the Stanley and Burya varieties (in a ratio of 50:50), without stones. Distillation takes place to less than 55-60 % vol. in a column still for thick liquids so that the distillate has an aroma and taste derived from the raw materials used.

— Physical, chemical and/or organoleptic characteristics:

'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit has the following physico-chemical properties:

- minimum alcoholic strength - 38 % vol.;
- methyl alcohol content - less than 9 g/hl;
- volatile substance content - equal to or exceeding 300 grams per hectolitre of 100 % vol. alcohol;
- hydrocyanic acid content - less than 0.1 g/hl.

'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit is a clear, transparent liquid, free of impurities. It is of a straw yellow to intensely golden colour as a result of having matured in oak barrels. It has a delicate, pleasant, recognisable plum aroma that is refined and modified during maturing in old barrels made of Bulgarian oak with a capacity of up to 500 litres. It is distinguished by its delicate, pleasant, recognisable plum aroma that is refined and modified during the maturing process.

The taste of 'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit is mild and velvety, acquiring a pleasant patina as it matures in oak barrels, and finished by means of ageing in the bottle.

The quality of the spirit drink is determined by its volatile substance content. Data from submitted reports on the physico-chemical analysis of 'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit show its volatile substance content to be about 300 g/hl a.a. The drink's aroma is determined by the ester content (about 60 g/hl a.a.) and its taste by the higher alcohol content (about 220 g/hl a.a.). According to the definition in Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008, a fruit spirit must contain a quantity of volatile substances equal to or exceeding 200 grams per hectolitre of 100 % vol. alcohol. The above values not only correspond to the statutory requirements but are also responsible for the drink's rich and sought-after organoleptic characteristics.

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

'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit owes its specific character to the quality and above all the varietal composition of the plums grown in the Lovech region, to its traditional production method, and to having been matured in oak barrels, made of Bulgarian oak and of a specific design and capacity, which help shape the drink's additional characteristics. Plums of the Stanley and Burya varieties, typical of the geographical area, are used in a ratio of 50:50 to produce the drink.

The method used to remove the stones from the fruit prior to crushing is traditional Bulgarian good production practice. This ensures that the final product has a low cyanide content, which is a typical feature of Bulgarian stone fruit spirits.

The removal of the stones from the fruit prior to crushing reduces the hydrocyanic acid content, as a result of which it is well below the maximum permitted level, i.e. 0.1 g/hl.

This means that the ethyl carbamate content – an undesirable constituent of the final product – is low.

The sugar and alcohol contents of the fermenting pulps are monitored during fermentation.

Distillation takes place to less than 55-60 % in a Type K5 still, a column still for thick liquids, which is where the distinctive aroma and taste that the distillate derives from the raw materials used are formed.

'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit was registered as a designation of origin by INRA (now the Patent Office of the Republic of Bulgaria) on 27 March 1986. The requirements to be met by the drink over the years have been laid down in an Industry Standard that was adopted by the State Standardisation Commission under the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Geographical area concerned

The geographical area in which 'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit is produced is the town of Lovech, situated in the municipality of Lovech in the province of Lovech. The municipality of Lovech is situated in Northern Bulgaria and is one of the municipalities constituting Lovech province.

The orchards from where the raw material for 'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit is obtained are situated in the following localities within the municipality of Lovech, in the province of Lovech in North-Central Bulgaria:

- Kyantsovitsa, Voditsata, Konarkata and Kovachevoto, which are part of the village of Kakrina;

- Kachitsa, Koevets and Turski Grobishta, which are part of the village of Hlevene.

Its terrain comprises a combination of plains and hills with generous natural attributes. It is here that the Balkan Mountains and the Danubian Plain meet. The region is crossed by the rivers Vit, Osam and Vidima and many of their tributaries. The Lovech region is one where fruit production is widespread. The cultivation of plums and the production of fruit spirits are traditional for the Lovech area. Over the years, a special rapport with plums and products derived from them has developed. Owing to its ancient Bulgarian roots and related traditions, the plum spirit attracts keen interest bordering on

devotion. Over time, the production of this drink has become centralised. 'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit is produced by methods that have their roots in the past, skilfully combined with, and improved by, modern technologies and techniques.

Plum orchards cover an area of 1 338 decares (one thousand three hundred and thirty-eight decares).

Method for obtaining the spirit drink

Fruit spirit with the geographical indication 'Loveshka slivova rakya' is produced from a high-quality plum distillate obtained by distilling fermented plum pulp. The plums intended for the production of the fruit spirit are harvested when they have attained full technical ripeness and have accumulated the maximum amount of sugars and aromatic substances.

— Characteristics of the fruit

Plums of the Stanley and Burya varieties, typical of the geographical area, are used in a ratio of 50:50 to produce 'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit.

1. The Stanley is a large fruit with an average weight of about 32 g, ovate, dark blue in colour with a thick bluish bloom; its flesh is grainy, golden yellow and succulent, with a pleasant taste and a strong and long-lasting variety-specific aroma, and a thin skin. The Stanley variety bears its first fruit in the second year; its fruit yield is regular and abundant and it is disease-resistant.
2. Burya is a hybrid variety with large to very large oval fruit with a blue-violet colour. It has a special variety-specific aroma.

When technically ripe, the blue plums of the Stanley and Burya varieties have a sugar content of at least 12-14 %, including up to 9 0Bx of reductive sugars (glucose and fructose) and up to 5 0Bx of sucrose. The acid content, expressed as malic acid, is as high as 5.4 g/l when the fruit is technically ripe. The pectinic substance content is 5-15 g/l. The mechanical composition of the plums is as follows: skins- 4-5.5 %; flesh – 94-97.7 %; stone – 4 %.

The plums are received in batches of a specific quantity and graded according to their external appearance and sugar content. After being carefully transported, they are immediately passed through a fruit processing machine to be crushed and the stones are removed. The plum pulp is then conveyed to insulated metal fermentation tanks which have a capacity of 50 m³ and are equipped with a stirring device. Up to 5 g/hl of sulphur dioxide is added to the plum pulp, the fermenter is filled to three-quarters of its capacity, and 20-40 g/hl of a specially selected yeast culture is added. The processes are monitored daily. The pulp is stirred and the temperature is monitored and the sugar content is checked twice daily, in the morning and evening. The fermentation temperature is maintained at 20-30 °C to prevent the loss of aromatic substances.

The pulp is ready for distillation when the sugar content has been reduced to less than 6 g/l. When preparing the pulp for boiling, care must be taken not to cause any delay to the process that would result in the loss of alcohol and reduce the quantity and quality of the final product. The rule that is followed in order to obtain high-quality distillate is: 'Distil as soon as fermentation is complete'.

Distillation takes place in Bulgarian-made Type K5 continuous stills (column stills for thick liquids). They are of a specific design, which is as follows:

The still consists of a distillation (fractionating) column with 13 single-cap contact devices, two dephlegmators, a condenser, a cooler, a bubble cap for the distillate, a horizontal heater and a level regulator. After the system is switched on, the column, dephlegmators and heater are heated up by introducing steam.

The process is controlled by regulating the flow of the input material, the steam pressure and the quantity of water used to cool the water-and-alcohol vapours. Distillation to an alcoholic strength of 55-60 % vol. in order to preserve the aromatic substances. The distillate is diluted with softened water to reduce the alcoholic strength to 42-45 % vol. and is clarified with tannins and gelatine in accordance with a special

laboratory programme. 652 litres of plum distillate with an alcohol content of 60 % vol. are required to produce 1 000 litres of 'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit with an alcoholic strength of 38 % vol.

After 6-10 days, the spirit drink is filtered through press filters and transferred into oak barrels for maturing, during which processes take place that further develop its specific organoleptic characteristics. Ageing is monitored by means of chemical tests and tasting assessments performed at regular intervals. After maturing for two years, 'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit is processed, corrected and filtered.

Adherence to the traditional method of producing 'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit ensures that the varietal aroma is preserved and transfers to the distillate and from there to the final product.

When all the organoleptic characteristics and physico-chemical properties conform fully with the requirements set out in the specification, the drink is bottled. Bottling may take place outside the geographical area in which the drink is produced.

Link with the geographical environment or origin

Details of the geographical area or origin relevant to the link

The plum orchards from which the fruit used to produce 'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit comes are situated in the villages of Kakrina and Hlevene in Lovech municipality, where the rolling Danubian Plain meets the Predbalkan foothills of the Balkan Mountains. In terms of terrain, localities in this area are typically on sloping ground, and the climate is temperate continental.

As the plum tree is a tree of temperate climates, the geographical region where 'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit is produced therefore possesses the natural and climatic conditions needed for growing good-quality plum trees.

The late-ripening blue plum varieties, Stanley and Burya, yield fruit of excellent quality, although only in semi-mountainous areas is irrigation not needed. Plum trees develop and fruit best in locations with an elevation of up to 600-700 m above sea-level. The orchards in Kakrina are 460-540 m above sea-level, and those in Hlevene are 350-450 m above sea-level, which is ideal for the development of good-quality fruit.

Humidity and soil moisture are vital for the proper development of plum trees. Semi-mountainous areas receive more rainfall, and are hence more humid, than arable farming areas. The low humidity typical of farmland areas suppresses and compromises the growth of fruit buds, the leaves of fruit trees turn yellow, and the quality of their fruit is impaired.

The average annual precipitation in the region is 636 mm. During the winter months, precipitation falls mainly as snow, the depth of the snow cover is 10-12 cm and the snow remains for approximately 60 days.

Plum trees are resistant to cold and are relatively drought-resistant.

Damage to plum trees and buds in winter is noted when temperatures fall below - 30 °C. During the period when the fruiting buds open and the trees come into blossom, and immediately thereafter, the critical [one or more words missing here] are: from -2.6 to -3.0 °C for blossom buds, when the petals appear; from -1.0 to -2.0 °C for blossom, and -0.6 to 1.2 °C for seedset.

Such temperatures are not typical for the region where 'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit is produced, where the average annual air temperature is 11.4 °C, the average temperature being 2 °C in January and 23 °C in July.

The region's soils are grey and dark grey forest soils. These soils have good structure, are air-permeable, moisture-retentive and warm up quickly during the spring. In terms of mechanical composition, they are of the sandy-clayey type, making them ideal for fruit-tree cultivation. The deep permeability of these soils does not inhibit the development of the plum trees' root system, as their roots do not become suffocated or waterlogged. In such high-moisture soils, the plum trees yield healthy fruit with excellent taste characteristics.

The absence of intense summer heat and the plentiful soil moisture and air humidity that are characteristic of this region are what determine the natural ripening

process of blue plums of the late-ripening Stanley and Burya varieties and the attainment of full technical ripeness.

These optimum climatic conditions that are a feature of the region are a prerequisite for the production of good-quality fruit.

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

The specific quality imparted by mixing two varieties of plum, namely the Stanley and the Burya, combined with the terroir of the localities where the fruit is grown, the production method that has been maintained over the years and developed by incorporating new techniques and technologies, is what determines the organoleptic properties of the fruit spirit with the geographical indication 'Loveshka slivova rakya' as a finished product.

The suitable climatic conditions of the Lovech region are conducive to the ripening of the fruit, which acquire a sweet taste and a slightly sour after-taste. The balance between the acid content and the sugar content achieved as a result of the natural conditions in this area is key to determining this fruit spirit's unique taste. These factors, along with the region's traditions, determine the drink's typical taste.

The human factor also plays a key role. Experienced practitioners process the raw materials into the final product in accordance with tried-and-tested good production practices, ensuring that the drink produced is of a consistently high quality and has stable characteristics.

Another key factor determining the quality of 'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit is the traditional method of ageing the product, as well as the conditions under which the ageing process takes place. The taste is determined by, and develops as a result of, the action of the wood on the drink.

'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit is matured by a traditional method in oak barrels made from the wood of Bulgarian oak trees that are at least 60 years old. Barrels made from the wood of trees of this age have dense, thick-layered timber and are rich in useful substances necessary for developing the taste and aroma of the fruit spirit. Well-seasoned staves that have been left to dry naturally for at least three years are used to make the barrels. During this period, oxidation of some of the tannins occurs in the wood, together with partial enzymatic hydrolysis of its components, lignin and hemicellulose. The natural seasoning of the staves is thus not just about removing moisture. Moreover, natural drying does not result in cracking and splitting. The barrels used for the ageing of plum rakia fruit spirits are highly prized. An old barrel is more valuable than a new one because it no longer contains an excess of tannins. A good-quality barrel, made in accordance with the relevant requirements and used with care, is serviceable for decades.

When it comes into contact with the wood of the barrel, the drink extracts tannins, colouring matter and other substances from the oak and gradual changes in quality occur: it takes on a golden colour, and its taste becomes mild and velvety, harmonious, with a pronounced plum aroma and bouquet, acquiring a pleasant patina.

The moderate climate of the Balkan Foreland (Predbalkan) helps to ensure that the process takes place in natural and highly favourable conditions. The processes for ageing the spirit drink are best carried out in a similar geographical region, in cellars that are fully or partially underground, because this prevents seasonal temperature differences that would affect the organoleptic qualities of the drink. In the ageing cellars, the temperature is maintained naturally at no more than 18-22 °C in summer, and at no less than 5 °C in winter.

The traditional method used to produce 'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit requires the use of precisely this type of cellar, typical of the region, for maturing purposes, and an ageing process of at least two years' duration, because this is what ensures that the drink develops its distinctive fruity aroma that takes shape as the drink matures in oak barrels.

European Union or national/regional provisions

The specific requirements for the definition, description, labelling and presentation of 'Loveshka slivova rakya' fruit spirit are set out in the Wine and Spirit Drinks Act (ZVSN), published in State Gazette No 45/2012 and in force since 16 September 2012:

By virtue of the definition and physico-chemical properties set out in Article 123(7) and (8) of the ZVSN, 'fruit rakia' fully corresponds to the definition of fruit spirit given in point 9 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. A fruit spirit with the geographical indication 'Loveshka slivova rakya' was approved pursuant to Order No T-RD-27-16 of the Minister for the Economy and Energy of 27 November 2013, which has been published on the Ministry of the Economy and Energy's website at: <http://www.mi.government.bg/bg/library-c28.html?page=3>

An organoleptic assessment by the Regional Wine-Tasting Commission of the Mizia Vine and Wine Chamber, Pleven, has been issued in respect of the organoleptic properties of the fruit spirit with the geographical indication 'Loveshka slivova rakya'.

Applicant

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

— Full address (street name and number, 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 labelling rules

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 spirit drink;
2. its 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 drink's technical specification;
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;
3. recommended uses of the drink;
4. medals and awards received;
5. maturing and ageing methods used;
6. method of production;
7. number of distillations;
8. information on the history of the drink and the producer;

9. information about the 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.