

TECHNICAL FILE

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Geographical indication to be registered: Сливенска перла (Сливенска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Сливен)/Slivenska Perla (Slivenska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya from Sliven)

Category of the spirit drink: Wine spirit

Description of the spirit drink:

– **Physical, chemical and/or organoleptic characteristics:**

'Slivenska Perla' is a wine spirit with a bright colour that ranges from pale yellow to amber and a pleasant Muscat aroma that combines the notes of roses and rose-scented geranium, a distinctive feature of the Muscat Ottonel grape variety, enhanced by characteristic buttery notes. In terms of taste, it is full-bodied, soft and palatable. Special and limited-edition series of 'Slivenska Perla' wine spirit are matured in oak barrels for a minimum of 6-12 months. Contact with the oak imparts sweetness, enhances the smoothness and enriches the Muscat aroma with a fine oaky finish. The best batches of distillate are matured in oak barrels for three years or more. The result is a product with a remarkably rich and harmonious complex aroma with a fine oaky finish and a particularly soft flavour with a lingering aftertaste. The drink has a minimum alcoholic strength of 40 % vol. It is produced in accordance with the rule that a maximum of 75 litres of wine may be obtained from 100 kg of grapes and may be distilled at no more than 65 % vol.

The Ministry of the Economy has received three test reports for different batches of 'Slivenska Perla' issued by an accredited laboratory (Annex 1); eight certificates of authenticity issued by the South-East Thrace (Yugoiztochna Trakiyska) Regional Vine and Wine Chamber (RLVK) (Annex 2); and two organoleptic assessment reports issued by the Central Wine-Tasting Arbitration Committee (TsADK) and by the Regional Wine-Tasting Committee (RDK) of the South-East Thrace (Yugoiztochnna Trakiyska) Regional Vine and Wine Chamber (RLVK) , respectively (Annex 3).

The organoleptic characteristics of the drink depend on the quantity of volatile substances it contains. The reports from the physical and chemical analyses of the different batches of 'Slivenska Perla' indicate that its volatile substances content is approximately 280 grams per hectolitre of 100 % vol. alcohol. The determining factor for the aroma is the quantity of esters (about 27 grams per hectolitre of 100 % vol. alcohol.) and aldehydes (more than 10 grams per hectolitre of 100 % vol. alcohol.) contained, and flavour characteristics are determined by higher alcohols (more than 200 grams per hectolitre of 100 % vol. alcohol.).

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

'Slivenska Perla' is one of the first special wine spirits to be produced in Bulgaria. It is made by distilling wines obtained by blending the aromatic grape varieties Muscat Ottonel, Tamyanka and Perle de Csaba. Strictly controlled temperature and technology process conditions are observed during fermentation. The distillation process is the specific feature distinguishing 'Slivenska Perla' from all other drinks in its category. A DK-2-type continuous distillation and rectification system is used. The wine is fed into the fractionating column at a specific temperature and phlegms form during distillation, some of which are removed from the distillate. The alcoholic strength of less than 62 – 65 % vol. reached at the point the distillate is removed is also very important. All of these requirements (the proportion of each grape variety and the ratio of phlegms, temperature and initial alcoholic strengths) were established in 1979 and continue to be strictly observed. The resulting distillates are then categorised. Some are stored in reinforced concrete, insulated tanks and stainless steel vessels. Others are matured for 6-12 months in French and Californian oak barrels that were previously used for maturing white wines, while special, limited-edition series are matured in barrels made of *Quercus stranjensis Turrrill*, a species of oak found only in Bulgaria. The drink may be in contact with the oak for more than 20 years.

Blending produces a wine spirit drink with a pronounced Muscat aroma combining notes of roses and rose-scented geranium and enhanced by characteristic buttery notes. The taste is full-bodied and smooth. In special and limited-edition series of the drink which are obtained after it has been in contact with oak for at least 6 months, one, three or more years, respectively, the organoleptic characteristics develop further. The dominant aroma is Muscat (roses and rose-scented geranium), with a fine oak nuance at the finish; the taste is smooth, with a distinct sweetness, smoothness and a long aftertaste.

Geographical area concerned

The geographical area in which the 'Slivenska Perla' is produced is centred on the city of Sliven and comprises the following land areas:

- The municipality of Sliven: nine land areas (micro-areas), namely, the city of Sliven, the villages of Gavrailovo, Gergevets, Gorno Aleksandrovo, Dragodanovo, Kaloyanovo, Nikolaevo, Strupets and Chintulovo;
- The municipality of Nova Zagora: five land areas (micro-areas), namely, the villages of Nauchen, Karanovo, Korten, Konyovo and Sadievo;
- The municipality of Tvarditsa: two land areas (micro-areas), namely, the city of Shivachevo and the village of Sborishte.

The vineyards where the raw materials for the production of the 'Slivenska Perla' are grown are located in the northern part of the Southern Thracian Lowlands (Trakiyska nizina) Vine Growing and Winemaking Region (Administrative Region of Sliven, the municipalities of Nova Zagora and Sliven) and the eastern part of the Rose Valley Vine Growing and Winemaking Region (the municipality of Tvarditsa). The geographical area comprises Sliven province and is situated in south-eastern Bulgaria. It is bordered by the eastern end of the Balkan Mountains (the Slivenska Planina range) to the north, the Sredna Gora range to the west, and the valley of the River Tundzha and the Thracian Lowlands to the south.

The area falls within two climatic zones, the continental and the transitional continental. The average elevation is 120 m above sea level. Summers are warm and winters, except in Tvarditsa municipality, are relatively mild. The relief is varied. Moving from north to

south, it includes parts of the foothills of the Balkan Mountains and the Sredna Gora range, then the Sub-Balkan plains and the mid-Tundzha Lowlands. The average ambient air temperature in the winter months is + 2.5 °C and winter temperatures are strongly influenced by the Balkan range which acts as a barrier against the cold continental air which occasionally comes from the north. Snow cover in the area is limited to a relatively short period of 20 to 25 days per year. On average, there are 235 frost-free days. The average annual precipitation is 597 mm/m². The annual average relative air humidity is 66 %.

Soils are predominantly cinnamonic forest soils, chernozems, vertisols, and alluvial and deluvial soils; other soil types are also present.

The relief, climate and soil conditions in the geographical area where 'Slivenska Perla' is produced are particularly suitable for cultivation of vines and particularly well suited to the cultivation of the aromatic grape varieties Muscat Ottonel, Tamyanka, Perle de Csaba, which are the main raw materials used to produce this drink.

Method for obtaining the spirit drink

'Slivenska Perla' wine spirit is produced in the geographical area around the city of Sliven, from the Muscat Ottonel, Tamyanka and Perle de Csaba grape varieties. The area planted with fruiting vines is 38 630.11 decares (3 863 hectares) with 3 701.11 decares (370 hectares) planted with the Muscat Ottonel variety.

According to data provided by the producers, the grapes are harvested once they have attained technical ripeness and have a sugar content of at least 19 %. Only high-quality grapes are used. The grapes are harvested by hand using plastic buckets and containers. The use of polyethylene sacks is not allowed. The grapes are then transported for processing, free of any packaging, in insulated metal containers of suitable design and holding capacity. The grapes are received and are graded in terms of mass, appearance, variety and sugar content. An average sample is taken from each vehicle, usually picked by hand, to assess the outward appearance, general condition and to ensure each load contains only one variety of grape, and their sugar content is determined using a saccharimeter. Processing takes place within 24 hours of harvesting. The berries are removed from the stems and crushed. The pulp is then cooled and macerated for 72 to 96 hours. The aromatic substances in the skins of the grapes are extracted through contact between the solid parts of the grape and the must. This process is conducted extremely carefully to ensure maximum saturation with valuable aromatic substances without coarsening the must. Alcoholic fermentation takes place at a controlled temperature using cultured strains of yeast in vinification tanks with a capacity of 30 000-60 000 kg of grape pulp which is subjected to a special moistening programme. Still alcoholic fermentation takes place in reinforced concrete tanks. Once the still fermentation is completed, the wine is carefully racked off the sediment to keep oxidation to a minimum. No sulphites (sulphur dioxide) are used and this is therefore an extremely delicate process. The wine obtained is then distilled as soon as possible in a DK-2-type continuous distillation and rectification system and in an *alambic charentais* type batch distillation system.

During distillation the equipment is operated in accordance with a special programme. The wine to be distilled is initially warmed in a pre-heating tank. This allows additional aromatic substances to form. It is then fed into the first dephlegmator which acts as a wine heater, heating the wine to the required temperature. The heated wine is then fed into the fractionating, rectifying and epuration sections of the system. Epuration removes the unwanted ester-aldehyde fraction. Determining the precise quantity of phlegms to be reintroduced into the rectifying column from the second and third dephlegmators is crucial in distillation, as it largely determines the quality of the resulting distillate. Human skill is vital at this stage. Highly skilled teams use good manufacturing practices to carry

out the process to perfection, ensuring a high-quality final product. Distillation ends once an alcoholic strength of 62 to 65 % vol. has been reached. Practice has shown that this is the best range in which to capture and retain the rich complex aromas.

About 70 % of the wine distillate for 'Slivenska Perla' wine spirit is stored in appropriately insulated reinforced concrete tanks and in stainless steel vessels of various capacities and designs with no contact with oak.

About 15 % of the distillates are left to mature in barrique-type French oak barrels, and another 15 % or so are matured in barrels made of Californian oak.

A special feature of 'Slivenska Perla' is that some batches of the distillate are also matured in partially 'spent' oak barrels, having already been used to mature white wine. The distillates are matured for 6-12 months in oak barrels, with the specific maturation time being determined primarily on the basis of regular assessments of their organoleptic characteristics. Maturation times may vary as the barrels may have been 'spent' to a greater or lesser degree and the distillate may acquire the requisite properties more quickly in some barrels than in others.

Limited-edition series of 'Slivenska Perla' wine spirit are made exclusively from distillates matured in barrels made from *Quercus hartwissiana* Stev., also known as *Quercus stranjensis* Turrill. This deciduous tree can grow to a height of 25 metres. It is a relic species that survived the last Ice Age that occurred 1.5 million years ago. In Europe, it is indigenous to and unique to the Mount Strandzha area, typically growing as individual trees or in groves on north-facing slopes and in lower wet areas, often along the banks of rivers and brooks. *Quercus stranjensis* Turrill is a protected species and is listed in the Bulgarian Biodiversity Act.

Maturation times are also dependent on how long the barrel has been in use. In some barrels, maturation may last for more than 20 years.

Contact with the wood enriches the distillates' colour, aroma and flavour.

The next step is to blend the distillate with treated softened water to achieve the desired alcoholic strength of 40 % vol. Finally, 'Slivenska Perla' wine spirit is bottled, and there are no restrictions on bottling so the drink may be bottled in areas other than the specified geographical area. Bottles have a characteristic shape and design that are easily recognisable by consumers.

The result is a special wine spirit with a colour ranging from pale yellow to amber. Batches produced without contact with oak are modified by adding caramel. The aroma is muscat, combining notes of rose and rose-scented geranium, enhanced by characteristic buttery notes. The taste is full-bodied and smooth.

Batches of the drink obtained after maturing in oak barrels have an amber colour which is enhanced where necessary by adding caramel to achieve the necessary colour intensity. The muscat aroma is enriched with a fine oaky nuance in the finish. The flavour is decidedly smooth and sweet, with a lingering aftertaste.

Link with the geographical environment or origin

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

'Slivenska Perla' wine spirit is traditional for, specific to, and typical of its geographical area. The area around Sliven has been inhabited since ancient times. Evidence of this is provided by the remains of prehistoric, Roman and mediaeval settlements, ruins of fortresses, old roads, etc. The settlement mounds near the villages of Ezero and

Karanovo in Nova Zagora municipality are of global significance and are world-famous. There are written documents from the period of Ottoman rule which indicate that 'winemaking was the third largest industry in the Sliven District, which also had some of the largest vineyards'. According to statistics from 1886, the largest vineyards in Bulgaria were situated in the district of Sliven, covering 77 096 dyulyums.

Industrial winemaking began after the liberation of Bulgaria, as a result of the huge increase in the area planted with vines and the large quantities of grapes harvested. In 1920, a group of entrepreneurial winemakers established the Shevka Vine and Wine Cooperative and, not much later, the first stills were imported from France. This marked the beginning of the industrial production of high-quality wines, distillates and spirit drinks for the Bulgarian market and for export. It is also around that time that the legendary 'recipe' for 'Slivenska Perla' wine spirit, one of the oldest special wine spirits in Bulgaria, came into being. The Shevka Wine Cooperative soon developed into a modern enterprise with sufficient capacity to process grapes from the region's numerous growers into high-quality products, including 'Slivenska Perla' wine spirit. It is not only the uniqueness of the geographical area, with its specific soil and climate conditions suitable for cultivating specific local grape varieties with unique characteristics and properties that has played an important part in the illustrious history of 'Slivenska Perla' wine spirit, but also the human factor. We honour the vine growers and wine-makers who set up the Shevka Cooperative and developed it into a modern business.

More recently, the process used to produce 'Slivenska Perla' was approved in 1980, with the issuance of Industry Standard 1871293-80, following consultations with the Ministry of Health and the state-owned enterprise (DSO) Vinprom, and then in 1985, when Industry Standard 1871293-85 was published (Annex 4).

Following the democratic changes in Bulgaria, 'Slivenska Perla' continued to be produced and it strengthened its position as a wine spirit with specific and authentic character. New Muscat Ottonel vineyards were planted. Efforts were made to restore plantations of the Perle de Csaba grape variety. This variety is characterised by its fine flavour and, when used to make the wine spirit, imparts its qualities to it.

The bottle, with its characteristic, contemporary design, was created and is recognisable to consumers. The drink became the subject of extensive promotional campaigns, presentations and tasting sessions in major retail chains, and was presented at international fairs, exhibitions and competitions (Annex 5). 'Slivenska Perla' has won many awards and distinctions. Over the years, 'Slivenska Perla' has been awarded two gold medals, two silver medals and three grand distinction certificates at the international viticulture and winemaking exhibition Vinaria in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. The drink's indisputable high quality was noted by the jury of distinguished experts at the annual *Rakia of the Year* competition organised by the National Institute for the Study of Wine and Spirit Drinks where 'Slivenska Perla' received five gold medals and one bronze medal. The drink has received several international awards such as a gold medal at ProdExpo 2009 in Moscow (Annex 6).

The wine spirit with the geographical indication 'Slivenska Perla' is well established on the Bulgarian market. According to data provided by the producers, a total of 4 797 475 half-litre bottles were sold in the period from 1 January 2003 to 31 March 2012.

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

'Slivenska Perla' has properties which set it apart from other wine spirits made in Bulgaria.

The specific features of the terroir in the area of the geographical indication, i.e. relief, soil and climatic conditions are suitable for growing the aromatic grape varieties Muscat Ottonel, Tamyanka and Perle de Csaba. The distillate for 'Slivenska Perla' wine spirit drink is obtained primarily from Muscat Ottonel, which accounts for approximately 85 % of the total quantity, and Tamyanka, with approximately 15 %. Limited-edition series of the drink are made from distillates obtained from 80 % Muscat Ottonel, 10 % Tamyanka and 10 % Perle de Csaba. The typical characteristics of the geographical area include its mountainous climate, sheltered from the north by the slopes of the Balkan Mountains, considerable precipitation, high average daily temperatures and sandy soils. These conditions produce high-quality grapes that contain significant quantities of aromatic substances and are harvested when an optimal sugar and acid content is reached. Alcoholic fermentation takes place under strictly controlled temperature and technical process conditions. The specific features of the distillation process (still design, phlegm proportions, temperature and alcoholic strengths) and the alcoholic strength at which distillation is completed (62-65 % vol.) were established in 1979 and continue to be strictly observed. Experienced process engineers maintain the traditions of making a quality product with the character and style of a special wine spirit with its distinctive pale yellow to amber colour, a pleasant Muscat aroma that combines notes of roses and rose-scented geranium, enhanced by further characteristic buttery notes and a smooth and full-bodied flavour. In special and limited-edition series of the drink, contact with the oak enriches the aroma with a fine oak finish and imparts sweetness to its taste, enhancing its smoothness.

European Union or national/regional provisions

National legislation does not include any additional specific provisions concerning 'Slivenska Perla' wine spirit. The production and marketing of 'Slivenska Perla' wine spirit are governed by the general requirements applicable to the 'Wine spirits' category laid down in the Wine and Spirit Drinks Act (ZVSN) published in State Gazette No 45/2012 and in force since 16 September 2012, which regulates the following:

- a definition of 'Traditional Bulgarian spirit drinks', including grape rakia (*grozdova rakia*);
- a national procedure for the approval of spirit drinks with a geographical indication.

A 'grape rakia' wine spirit with the geographical indication of 'Slivenska Perla' was approved by Order No T-RD-27-14 of the Minister for the Economy and Energy of 27 November 2013 (Annex 7). The document has been published on the Ministry of the Economy's website at: <http://www.mi.government.bg/bg/library/zapowed-za-utvarjdavane-na-vinena-destilatna-spirtna-napitka-grozdova-rakiya-s-geografsko-ukazanie-s-60-c28-m361-1.html>

- Specific rules for placing a wine spirit drink on the market:

Any wine spirit produced in Bulgaria may be placed on the market only if accompanied by a copy of the 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). An RLVK is an inter-professional organisation of producers, processors and traders of vine and wine products and spirit drinks that are legal persons with an establishment and a territorial jurisdiction. RLVKs determine the composition of the Regional Wine-Tasting Committees (RDKs) and issue certificates of authenticity for wine spirits, including drinks with a geographical indication. The RDK attached to an RLVK draws up an organoleptic assessment of the wine spirit batch, stating that, in terms of its organoleptic and physico-chemical properties, the batch assessed corresponds to its category and may be bottled and placed on the market. The RDK includes technical experts engaged in the

production of wines and spirit drinks in the respective region and who are actively involved in monitoring the quality of these drinks before they are placed on the market.

Wine spirit with the geographical indication 'Slivenska Perla' is subject to organoleptic assessment by the RDK under the South-East Thrace (Yugoiztochna Trakiyska) Regional Vine and Wine Chamber having its registered office and head office in Sliven.

The Ministry of the Economy has received eight certificates of authenticity for 'Slivenska Perla' (Annex 2).

Applicant

— Member State, third country or legal/natural person: Република България, Министерство на икономиката / Bulgaria, Ministry of the Economy

— Full address (street number and name, town/city and postal code, country): гр. София 1052, ул. "Славянска" № 8, Република България / ul. Slavyanska 8, 1052 Sofia, Bulgaria

— Legal status (in the case of legal persons)

Supplement to the geographical indication

Specific labelling rules

Under 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. 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 for the drink,
7. the name (trade name) and registered office of the producer,
8. the name (trade 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 producer's registration certificate number.

When labelling a spirit drink, the following optional information may be provided:

1. the name of the geographical area in which the drink was produced,
2. the name of the fruit or fruits or name of the raw material from which the drink was produced,
4. the recommended use of the drink,

5. medals and awards received,
6. the maturing and ageing methods used,
7. the method of production,
8. the number of distillations,
9. information about the history of the drink and the producer,
10. information about persons involved in marketing the drink.

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