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TECHNICAL FILE
GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION
'GÉNÉPI DES ALPES/GENEPÌ DELLE ALPI'

1. Name and category of the spirit drink including the geographical indication: 'Génépi des Alpes/Genepì delle Alpi'

Description of the spirit drink: Liqueur

'Genepì delle Alpi/Génépi des Alpes' is a floral and herbal-scented liqueur with the characteristic bitter taste conferred by the wormwood plant.

2. Description of the spirit drink:

(a) Principal physical, chemical and organoleptic characteristics

- colourless or with colour nuances ranging from pale yellow to light green, from translucent to transparent;
- sweet taste attenuated by bitterness from the wormwood plant;
- fresh and delicate aromas from the plants of the genus *Artemisia* used. The aromatic profile may include both vegetal and floral aromas from any plants used in addition to wormwood. In all cases the aroma of the wormwood plant remains predominant.

(b) Specific characteristics of the spirit drink as compared to the relevant category

- the alcoholic strength by volume is equal to or greater than 30 %;
- the minimum quantity of wormwood plants used in the preparation of the liqueur is more than 2 grams of dried flower stems (without the root) per litre of finished product.

(c) Geographical area concerned

The collection of wild wormwood plants and cultivation of wormwood plants, the production of the liqueur and its packaging take place in Italy (Piedmont Region and the Autonomous Region of Valle d'Aosta) and in France (departments of Alpes de Haute-Provence, Hautes-Alpes, Alpes Maritimes, Isère, Savoie and Haute-Savoie). Within the geographical area concerned, wild plants are collected and wormwood is cultivated in an area situated at more than 1 500 metres above sea level.

(d) Method for obtaining the spirit drink

The following species of wormwood plants are used in the preparation of 'Genepì delle Alpi/Génépi des Alpes' liqueur: *Artemisia mutellina* or *umbelliformis* (white wormwood), *Artemisia genipi* or *spicata* (black wormwood), *Artemisia glacialis* (glacier wormwood), *Artemisia nivalis* (snow wormwood). The use of other plants in addition to those of the genus *Artemisia* to give the liqueur a stronger and more lingering taste has become established practice. The plants are used to flavour and colour the liqueur. The additional botanical species that may be used are: angelica, common wormwood (*A. vulgaris*), basil, sweet flag, cinnamon, clove, juniper, hyssop, lavender, clover, mint, lemon balm, St John's wort, oregano, white nettle, Scots pine, rosemary, savory, sage, thyme, elder, wild thyme, verbena and vetch. The maximum percentage by weight of plants additionally used in the production of aromatic extracts varies according to the production method used, as follows: 15 % of the original dry matter in the case

of maceration and suspension, and 50 % of the original dry matter in the case of distillation. The typical organoleptic characteristics of 'Génépi des Alpes/Genepì delle Alpi' liqueur must be complied with.

The aromatic extraction may take place in one of the following three ways, or a combination of all three:

- *maceration* of the plants in a water-alcohol solution for a minimum period of 20 days for dried plants and 15 days for fresh plants. The quantity of wormwood plants must account for at least 85 % by weight of the plants used;
- *suspension,* prepared from fresh or dried plants, placed on special grills suspended above the water-alcohol solution, in hermetically sealed containers where the head space, saturated with alcohol, extracts – for a period of at least 90 days – the volatile compounds from the plants. The quantity of wormwood plants must account for at least 85 % by weight of the plants used;
- *distillation* of an infusion obtained from plants macerated in water-alcohol solution. The quantity of wormwood plants must account for at least 50 % by weight of the plants used.

The minimum quantity of wormwood plants used in the preparation of the liqueur is more than 2 grams of dried flower stems (without the root) per litre of finished product.

Only ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin may be used. The use of grape marc spirit is prohibited. All solutions obtained, which may be mixed together in preparing the liqueur, must comply with the conditions laid down.

The aromatic solution obtained is added to a mixture of water, sugar and neutral ethyl alcohol to finish the preparation of the liqueur. Only wormwood plants coming from the relevant geographical area (paragraph c) and the additional botanical species allowed may be used to flavour the liqueur, using the traditional methods set out in Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 1334/2008. The colour extraction is obtained by macerating the plants listed above in a water-alcohol solution. Artificial colourings or flavourings may not be added at any stage of the process.

The preparation, bottling and packaging of 'Génépi des Alpes/Genepì delle Alpi' liqueur must take place in the production facilities using only glass containers which, because they are neutral and inert, preserve the taste and aromatic characteristics of the finished product. These containers also allow optimum storage and conservation and have good thermal inertia.

(e) Details bearing out the link with the geographical environment or the geographical origin

Natural factors The production area of 'Genepì delle Alpi/Génépi des Alpes' is located in the Western Alps massif, between Lake Geneva and the Valais to the north and Provence and Liguria to the south. It is divided from north to south by the French-Italian border, which roughly follows the line of the mountain ridge. On either side of this axis, the region straddling the border consists of high-altitude mountains, frequently at an elevation of more than 3 000 metres. From this axis, some valleys cut through the massif to the surrounding lowland plains, namely the Rhone Valley to the west and the Po Valley to the east. The area is very diverse geologically. The most impressive peaks are chiefly of granite, made up of schist, gneiss and other metamorphic rocks in the central areas, and sedimentary rocks (mainly limestone and clay) on the outer edges, especially on the French western flank (sub-alpine massif). Quaternary glaciations carved out the landscape, creating a valley profile with typical glacial morphology and depositing huge volumes of moraine – consisting of boulders and compact clay – at all altitudes.

The mountain climate is characterised by long, severe winters, with large temperature variations between day and night. Precipitations are abundant and relatively well distributed throughout the year, falling as snow in winter. The growing season is very short (only three to four months), during which time plants must both grow and reproduce. The name 'wormwood' traditionally covers four species of *Artemisia* which are endemic to the high alpine regions. They grow naturally in rocky ravines, on glacial moraines and on high-altitude scree slopes (above 2 000 metres) that are poor in organic matter. They are suited to the harsh climate that prevails at these altitudes for most of the year and are particularly rich in aromatic compounds, essential oils and bitter components.

Human factors: Among the inhabitants of the western Alps the plant has historically been used as a common treatment for many inflammatory digestive ailments. In addition to its digestive, invigorating and tonic properties, it is also considered to have an effect on the respiratory system due to its expectorant and decongestant properties, and has therefore been used since the Middle Ages to cure colds (CNAC, 1995; DELAHAYE, 2008). The wormwood plant has historically been used to produce liqueur, as part of strong family traditions passed down over the centuries. In the western Alps liqueur-making dates back to the eighteenth century. Evidence of this can be seen in the production by monks at the Grande Chartreuse, in the massif of the same name, of a range of herbal liqueurs made according to secret recipes since 1760. Stills have been used to produce genepi liqueur in the Occitan valleys of Piedmont since the second half of the 18th century. The systems and methods used to produce the liqueur at the time are described in detail in a recipe book dated 1823.

Factories where the herbal liqueur was produced using the traditional method of infusion became widespread from the second half of 19th century. Various studies, documents and historical labels preserved to this day by old distilleries still present in the area where 'Génépi des Alpes/Genepì delle Alpi' is produced bear witness to this development.

In the 20th century, in response to growing demand for the liqueur, in part as a result of the expansion of winter sports tourism, it became necessary to cultivate the plant to meet the increased demand for the herb and avoid excessive pressure on the wild plant. Cultivating the plant, which can only take place at high altitudes, is difficult but helps to preserve the botanical and chemical properties of the wild plant. The minimum growing elevation is 1 500 metres.

Cultivation studies were conducted from the 1970s onwards, and projects were later carried out, including at EU level, with the aim of developing cultivation in order to determine the best techniques and explore possibilities of expansion.

The reputation that 'Génépi des Alpes/Genepì delle Alpi' enjoys today is also clear from its inclusion in the inventory of France's culinary heritage, which states that the drink is currently 'enjoyed across the Alps, especially during the winter and summer tourist season', and if it is 'first and foremost a digestif ... it can also be used to flavour certain sweets'. (Inventory of the culinary heritage of France — Rhône-Alpes region', Albin Michel/CNAC, 1995).

Causal link between the defined area and the product. Among the many plants traditionally gathered in the Alps, wormwood has long had a special role. Initially sought after for its medicinal properties, in a predominantly domestic context, it subsequently made a name for itself as a liqueur in the 19th century,

thanks to the efforts of liqueur producers living in the alpine valleys on both sides of the border. Often family-run businesses, the liqueur producers have preserved and improved the old recipes in keeping with tradition. These more or less secret recipes have always contained other aromatic species that help improve the drink's taste and aroma. Even today, the liqueur producers continue this practice and use their own secret recipes.

The second half of the 20th century saw another boom in production with the growth of winter sports, providing an important local market. Although liqueur production has established itself as a small-scale industry in the valleys and foothills of the Alps, the plants continue to be harvested from the same locations for obvious environmental reasons: not only is the alpine massif the natural habitat of the plant species used, but the highest concentration of essential oils are produced under the most extreme mountain conditions. At low altitudes, the plants are vulnerable to fungal diseases which cause them to lose their properties. In addition to gathering wild specimens in areas that are difficult to reach, the plant is now also cultivated at sites that allow its aromatic properties to be preserved. The floral and herbaceous notes that dominate the liqueur's taste and aroma are directly related to the quantity of plants collected from a site at a favourable altitude. The characteristic bitter taste of the wormwood influences the flavour and contributes to the overall balance of the product.

In the period from 2010 to 2013, the Franco-Italian interregional project 'Genepì delle Alpi e altre piante officinali' (Alpine wormwood and other medicinal plants) – GENEALP helped boost production in the alpine cross-border region of the two countries (Alcotra 2007-2013). As part of the GENEALP project, studies conducted by the University of Turin on the *Artemisia Umbelliformis* plant used for cultivation have shown that ecotypes (plants) linked to the cross-border area are chemically and morphologically distinct from plants from other areas. The aromatic compounds, essential oils and bitter components that characterise the chemical profile of the plants give 'Génépi des Alpes/Genepì delle Alpi' liqueur a particular sensory profile which makes it stand out from other spirit drinks in the same category.

'Génépi des Alpes/Genepì delle Alpi' is characterised by a high content of terpenes and essential oils, chemical compounds that are extremely volatile and therefore susceptible to oxidation particularly in the case of bulk handling. The liqueur is highly sensitive to temperature variations, which affect the taste balance (bitterness to sweetness ratio) and result in a loss of aromatic intensity. Exposure to light can also lead to a loss of colour. This may occur during transportation in tanks or during storage. This requires the preparation, bottling and packaging to take place at the production facilities so as to allow the product's sensory and aromatic characteristics to be preserved and analytical and organoleptic checks to be carried out, which is especially important. The aim of such checks is to verify that the aromatic balance of the product has been preserved and that there is no deterioration.

'Genepì delle Alpi/Génépi des Alpes' therefore retains very strong cultural ties with the alpine environment, rooted in family traditions and the liqueur-makers' skills. 'Genepì delle Alpi/Génépi des Alpes' liqueur, like alpine dairy products, is an expression of both mountain farming and artisanal production in the valleys, thus reflecting the complexity of farming systems in the mountain environment. It has become a strong and recognised feature of alpine identity, like other local products that have found a unique market in alpine resorts.

Name and address of applicant

For Italy:

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– Istituto Tutela Grappa della Valle d'Aosta, Zona industriale 12, 11020 Saint-Marcel-Aosta

For France:

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