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SPECIFICATION

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 1151/2012 on protected geographical indications and protected designations of origin

"Welsh Laverbread"

PDO (✔) PGI ( )

1 RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT IN THE MEMBER STATE

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2 GROUP

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Composition:	Producers/processors(3)

3 TYPE OF PRODUCT

Class 1.8 Other products of Annex 1 of the Treaty

4 SPECIFICATION

4.1 Name: "Welsh Laverbread"

4.2 Description:

"Welsh Laverbread" is the name given to a traditional Welsh delicacy made from cooked laver (seaweed) gathered or "plucked" from the coastline of Wales.

The Latin name for laver is *porphyra umbilicalis*. It is a small red/purple algae (up to 20cms across and up to 50cms long) with an irregularly shaped broad frond. Laver is unique as seaweed as it is the only seaweed which is only one cell thick. The laver is "raven" black in colour with tints of purple and dark green and has a light silk like texture throughout its growth, which becomes less tender in the summer months.

"Welsh Laverbread" is cooked laver with salt and water, no other ingredient or additive is added and it has the following characteristics:

- Appearance and texture: shredded dark green black. It can be minced to a dense soft gelatinous spinach like puree/paste or chopped for a coarser texture.
- Aroma and taste; As "Welsh Laverbread" is cooked from fresh laver immediately after it has been plucked from the rocky shores and washed, it retains the strong dominant lingering unique saline flavour and distinct odour of the salty sea and fresh sea air. Subtle flavour nuances will differ depending upon varied conditions along the Welsh coast from where the laver was "plucked"

Its nutritional profile is rich in minerals and vitamins (especially high in iodine and iron) and low in calories. It can be an acquired taste enjoyed on its own or as an ingredient adding savoury depth and dimension to a recipe.

"Welsh Laverbread" is sold loose, predominantly at fish market stalls, fish shops and fish wholesalers and or packaged according to customer requirements. "Welsh Laverbread" can be sold fresh or frozen

4.3 Geographical area:

The country of Wales.

4.4 Proof of origin:

Collection of the laver

Laver is collected or plucked by hand from the rocks anywhere along the Welsh coastline by gatherers. The Welsh coastline includes designated Special Areas of Conservation and Blue flag beaches in addition to non-designated areas. Laver is then brought by the gatherers to the processor to be processed into "Welsh Laverbread".

In order to prove the origin of the sea weed, a movement document records the following;-

- Name and address of gatherer
- What was gathered

- Where the laver was gathered
- Date of gathering
- Quantity gathered
- Date of delivery to processor
- Signed/dated on delivery
- Signed dated by receiving processor

Intake of raw material

- The movement document is checked at the processor or factory prior to production; batch codes are noted and signed before a copy is given to both parties.
- When the laver arrives at the processor or factory it is inspected visually and smelt against a raw material specification which ensures that all the fresh laver used to make “Welsh Laverbread” is from laver that is black, clean and fresh smelling.
- A traceability number/code is allocated to each batch of fresh laver.
- The fresh laver is stored to protect it from the elements,

Making of “Welsh Laverbread”

- Monitoring is either documented on record sheets throughout the production process or recorded in a hand written diary
- Weights are checked against recipe specification in written form or from experience
- Microbiological tests are carried out weekly by an independent laboratory and test results are held for the necessary legal time requirement.
- All cooking, cooling times and temperatures used in the making of laverbread is recorded against HACCP – Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points or similar control.

Storage of “Welsh Laverbread”

- Finished “Welsh Laverbread” is stored in a chiller prior to dispatch.

Packaging and Labelling

- “Welsh Laverbread” is packaged according to customer requirements checked weighed and labelled. Specifications are referenced to determine the assembly weights and tolerances. Date coding is applied with an appropriate durability date and Date of Production. When using a “Use by Date” it is “Date of Production” (DOP) + 6days.
- Each batch of “Welsh Laverbread” cooked can be traced back via the dates on the label to the original batch of laver collected.

4.5 Method of production:

Collection of the laver

- The seaweed is collected or “plucked” from the rocks by hand throughout the year. The term “plucked” refers to the process of the seaweed being pulled off or out from the lavers place of growth. The laver is harvested when the fronds of the laver, are of a sufficient length that they are practical to “pluck” from the rocks. Any fronds less than 10 cms would be impractical to collect.
- If a source of suitable clean water is nearby, the laver is then given a preliminary rinse in clean sea water by the gatherer.
- The collected seaweed is then transported to the factory or processor where it is processed into Welsh Laverbread.

Making of the laverbread.

- The laver is repeatedly washed in potable water to remove any sand, grit and or any foreign bodies. This can be done either by hand or by machine the laver is then drained to remove the excess water.
- The length of fronds of the laver will vary according to its age when collected. If the fronds are more than 30 cms, the laver may be roughly chopped prior to cooking
- After the laver has been washed and drained the laver must be cooked immediately.
- The clean seaweed is added to water to which salt is added. The salt can be Pure Dried Vacuum (PDV) salt, sea salt or similar. The salt acts a preserver and also compensates for the salt that has been removed during the washing process. The amount of salt added is based on the skill and experience of the “Welsh Laverbread” maker but will not be more than 1% of the final product.
- Water acts as an agent for cooking the laver to make “Welsh Laverbread”, The amount of water used will vary according to the texture of the laver which will depend on varying factors such as the age of the laver and the season when the laver is collected. For example in Spring the laver gathered may be more succulent and requires less water for cooking than at other times of the year. The exact quantity of water required is a skill based on the experience of the Welsh Laverbread processor.
- The laver is cooked in batches either continuously for 3-4 hours at a temperature greater than 98˚ C or at a lower temperature of 80˚C for up to 9 hours. Alternatively very small quantities of laver can be cooked in a pressure cooker for 20 minutes or until a core temperature of 85˚C is achieved. Cooking time may vary throughout the year, with the younger more succulent laver gathered in the spring often requiring a shorter cooking period. The exact cooking time required is a skill based on the experience of the “Welsh Laverbread” processor.
- When cooked, the seaweed depending upon its moisture content is either drained first or placed directly into a mincing machine and pureed. Alternatively for a more textured laverbread the laver can be roughly chopped.
- After cooking seaweed is deposited into stainless steel (or similar) shallow trays and put into the chiller.

- Finished product units are deposited into sterile containers and returned to the chiller for storage prior to dispatch

4.6 Link:

The unique qualities of “Welsh Laverbread” with its salty sea odour and unique strong dominant lingering salty flavour of the sea are derived from the raw materials – laver, salt, sea water from where it is collected and the production process.

“Welsh Laverbreads’” taste and appearance is characteristic of its origin. “Welsh Laverbread” is affected by the cleanliness and temperature of the sea water as well as the method of making it.

The Welsh coastline has an exceptionally diverse intertidal flora and offers habitats for marine algae ranging from open coast to sheltered rock and sediment and from fully saline to estuarine conditions. Laver is highly adaptable to conditions on different parts of the rocky shore and is able to withstand prolonged periods of exposure to the air as well as tolerating a greater degree of wave action than most red algae. It occurs singly or in dense colonies throughout the intertidal but most frequently at upper levels.

A large proportion of the Welsh coastline is designated a Special Areas of Conservation. Many laver collection areas are within Blue Flag beaches where water quality is regularly monitored by Natural Resources Wales who are responsible for ensuring that the water quality is of a good standard. The lack of large cities and industry surrounding the Irish Sea, contributes to its cleanliness which is reflected in the quality and taste of the laver being picked in these areas. Research undertaken by the Natural Resources Wales has also shown that seasonal sea temperatures in this area have risen, and this has impacted on the growth of the laver. In addition to the rise in sea temperature being linked to climate change the Welsh coast also benefits from the North Atlantic Gulf Stream which raises sea temperature off the coast of Wales. In the Spring when sea temperatures begin to warm the laver grows quicker. New young fresh growth is more tender to cook, requires less cooking time and contributes to “Welsh Laverbread’s” succulent silk like texture.

Historical Link

In 1607 Camden’s Britannica recorded laver or “lhawvan” being eaten as a “survival food from the sea” by British people forced from their homes during Viking and Roman invasions. Consumption of laver by the Welsh was first recorded in 1865 by George Borrow on his travels through Wales when he mentioned "moor mutton and piping hot laver sauce" as one of South Wales' great dishes.

Historically “Welsh Laverbread” was very important as a nutritious high energy food source particularly for hard working pit workers in the South Wales mining valleys where it became a staple breakfast food. Women and children, who also worked underground in the pits were often malnourished and were advised by doctors to eat Welsh Laverbread because it was a very good source of iron.

In 1800-1950 collecting laver to make “Welsh Laverbread” was a small cottage industry in Pembrokeshire. The laver was thrown over thatched huts to dry before being picked up by a horse and cart and taken to Pembroke station to be sold to businesses in Swansea where it was cooked into “Welsh Laverbread” and sold at local markets. Although laver was historically sourced on the Pembrokeshire and Gower coastline it is now mainly collected along the coastlines of North and South Wales, but still brought to Penclawdd in Gower to be processed.

Historically seaweed was collected and hand washed before being traditionally cooked in boiling pans over coal fires or cured in drying houses. Modern processing plants now use modern equipment and technology, however, laverbread making still remains a cottage industry as well and traditional cooking methods are honoured. Traditional skills of plucking or collecting the laver and cooking and mincing the laverbread to attain the right consistency are skills which have been passed down through the generations.

Laverbread is a well-known Welsh delicacy recognised both within and outside Wales. It is an acquired taste, traditionally eaten fried either as it is or rolled in oatmeal and usually eaten with bacon and cockles as a traditional cooked welsh breakfast.

Listed below are quotes from famous Welsh people and chefs recognising the unique qualities of “Welsh Laverbread” and its association with Wales.

The famous Welsh actor Richard Burton is attributed as describing “Welsh Laverbread” as ‘Welshman’s caviar’

Welsh Laverbread was described in an article by journalist Robin Turner as being

“As Welsh as our unspoilt rolling moorlands, mellifluous male voice choirs and long place names”

The One Show food critic Jay Rayner after visiting Swansea market, tried “Welsh Laverbread” and said, “Welsh Laverbread” is one of those real seaside flavours, you can taste the depth of the minerals, it's slightly salty, very green, very rich, and full of what the Japanese call 'umami' (savouriness)”

“Welsh Laverbread” from Selwyn’s Penclawdd Seafood has achieved silver award in the True Taste of Wales awards.

4.7 Inspection body:

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4.8 Labelling: