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SPECIFICATION

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

"West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon"

EC No:

PDO ( ) PGI (✔)

1 RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT IN THE MEMBER STATE

UNITED KINGDOM

Name: Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Address: Food Composition and Standards Team - Food and Policy Unit
Area 7E
9 Millbank
Nobel House
C/o 17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR
United Kingdom

Tel: +44207 238 6075

Fax: +44207 238 5728

Email: protectedfoodnames@defra.gov.uk

2 GROUP

Name: Carmarthen Coracle & Netsmen's Association

Address: 1st Floor Office Suite,
9 Elliston Terrace
Carmarthen
SA31 1HA

Tel.: 07792 018 168

E-mail: Kirsty@cnwd.co.uk

Composition: Producers/processors (1) Other (16)
16 Fishing Vessels

3 TYPE OF PRODUCT

Class- Group 1.7: Fresh Fish, molluscs, and crustaceans and products derived there from.

4 SPECIFICATION

4.1 Name:

"West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon"

4.2 Description:

"West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon" is the name given to fish of the Salmo Salar species which have been caught using the ancient Welsh traditional method of coracle fishing.

Fresh Coracle Caught Salmon are bright silver, with a dark blue back and black spots which are predominantly located above the lateral line although the caudal fin is usually unspotted. The flesh is firm with a dense texture and distinctive pink/red colour it has a fresh fish smell described by the coracle fishermen as being similar to a "watermelon"

"West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon" are caught as soon as they enter the river system from the sea in the low and tidal waters of the river before they become characteristically inactive in the environment of the river and their reserves are depleted. The fish are fresh with firm flesh and superior developed muscle quality resulting in denser texture with high muscle protein and oil content. They have a visibly elongated athletic shape, without excessive fat deposition resulting from their lengthy swim at sea and the high quality feeding grounds available whilst at sea.

Due to its wild nature "West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon" does not contain any artificial additives and/or colourings and the size of the fish will vary. However because of a restrictive net mesh size of 10cms, the minimum size for "West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon" would be 1kgs as any fish smaller in size would escape through the net. The maximum size for West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon is 15kgs

"West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon" is distinguishable from other salmon types due to its perfect markings, with scales intact and good muscle tone and firm texture and it should be free from distortion to its tail, fins or head. In addition, the tail fin is more developed and when extended is concave and the wrist of the tail is narrow with distinct broadening on the tail side of the wrist. The jaw of the salmon extends no further than the rear edge of the eye and the male wild salmon has a pronounced "beak". As coracle fishing catches salmon singularly and not in multiples "West Wales Coracle Caught" Salmon is not as susceptible to bruising, flesh damage and distortion that can occur with other farmed or drift net caught salmon. This contributes to the eating quality of the "West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon" with its pristine firm flesh and dense texture.

When cooked "West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon" has a distinct strong sweet "fresh" taste with subtle oily tones which are not overbearing to the palate and the flesh is firm with a dense texture. "West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon" has a high muscle protein and oil content. .

"West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon" are primarily sold whole and mostly freshly caught although the salmon may be sold frozen.

4.3 Geographical area:

The areas in the rivers Tywi, the River Taf and the River Teifi in West Wales where coracle fishing is legally allowed to take place as stated by the coracle net limitation orders for each of the 3 rivers are as follows;-

River Tywi;-In that part of the river which lies between an imaginary line drawn straight across the Tywi river from the railway pumping station near the old tinplate works at National Grid Reference(NGR) SN 420205and an imaginary line drawn straight across the Tywi at NGR SN 394137

River Teifi;-In that part of the river that lies between Cardigan bridge and Llechryd bridge.

River Taf In the part of the river which lies between the main road bridge on the A477 between Carmarthen-Pembroke situated approximately 1.6 kms downstream to an imaginary line drawn straight across the river Taf from Wharley point to Ginst point

4.4 Proof of origin:

There are strict guidelines where coracle fishing can be practiced on each of the three rivers where “West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon” are caught. These guidelines only allow coracle fishing within specific tidal areas of the rivers.

The use of coracle nets is covered by legislation which:

- Determines the number of nets that can be fished in a particular area.
- Govern the closing season, weekly closing times (coracle fishing is not permitted on weekends) and the type of fishing equipment and mesh size that can be used.

Each coracle on the river is issued with a number and at the beginning of the season each licence holder is issued with a log book and set of tags correlating to their specific vessel.

The licence holder must fill out his log book daily and every catch can be traced as each fish is tagged under Environment Agencies guidelines. A plastic tag with a unique identification number is inserted through the gill of each Salmon and it is mandatory to place the tag in the fish gill prior to landing.

Each Log book records:

- Tag numbers
- Date of catch
- Size/Weight of the fish

The tags show the fish number and the coracle number, each tag can easily be traced back to the coracle from where the fish was caught. This ensures complete transparency and traceability throughout the process. It is illegal to supply any “West Wales Coracle caught Salmon” untagged.

Spot checks are regularly carried out by Enforcement Officers to ensure licence holders are keeping up to date with their recordings and the fish being caught are corresponding with these recordings.

At the end of the season the logs books and remaining tags are returned to the Environmental Agency (or similar enforcing body). New log books and tags are issued for the following season.

4.5 Method of production:

"West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon" are caught by coracle fishermen during the salmon season which varies according to the river from which it is caught.

The Coracle Fishing Season for Salmon differs according to the river being fished.

- On the Tywi the season runs from the 1st June – 31st July
- On the Teifi the season runs from the 1st June – 31st August
- On the Taf the season runs from 1st June – 31st July

Coracles

Coracles are small oval shaped vessels designed with a plank across the middle to form a seat. They are hand-made from ash and willow and are constructed like baskets. Each coracle carries one fisherman and is steered by a singlehanded scull.

Coracle fishing involves a pair of coracles working together, with a net suspended between them. Fishing using this method takes place mainly at night to prevent the salmon seeing the shadow of the coracle or the net coming towards them, as they return to their spawning ground.

Nets

The nets are traditionally hand-made from linen or hemp twain, and are specially made. As with the making of the coracles, the skill and expertise of net making has also evolved with the introduction of nylon.

The net is a single walled trammel which are restricted to 12metres wide with an opening of 45cm. The legal minimum mesh size for a coracle net is 10cm.

There are 2 types of nets which are used depending upon the time of the season.

In the spring the mesh size of the net is usually 15cms because the fish are generally bigger and therefore any fish under 1.8kgs at that time would be lost.

In early summer the mesh size is changed to the legal minimum. This allows all nursery fish or fish 1kg or less to escape. This shows that coracle fishing is a sustainable method of fishing.

Method of fishing

The net is stretched between the two coracles and is the earliest form of trawl fishing known to the fishing industry. The salmon travel to its spawning ground along the beds of the rivers following its contours. This knowledge has been accrued by the coracle men over centuries of fishing.

Coracle fishing is only permitted in the specific tidal areas of the rivers Taf, Tywi and Teifi. The lines of demarcation are stated in the fishing bylaws. The net is trawled on the bed of the river using small pieces of lead weight. The net will only catch fish in the depth of the first 18 inches from the bed of the river. Any fish above that level will escape capture because the salmon would then be swimming above the net. The cork line helps to keep the head of the net in a forward arced position and the two coracles will keep the mouth of the net open.

Production Stages.

I) Salmon are caught by coracle fishing using a hand-made net. Coracle fishing involves a pair of coracles working together, with a net suspended between them as described above.

II) Salmon are tagged on board the coracle with a plastic tag inserted through the gill of each Salmon. The tag is placed in the fish gill prior to landing. Each tag correlates to the specific coracle which has caught the fish.

III) Salmon are taken to shore in the coracle. The salmon are then, weighed on landing, & logged in the log book which is issued to each licensed coracle fisherman.

IV) The salmon is transported to storage where they are iced in a cool box or stored in a fridge at a temperature of 0ºc- 4ºc.

V) The fish are primarily sold whole and freshly caught to local restaurants and hotels as a premium local/regional seasonal product. They are also sold to fish wholesalers and local fishmongers and to fish processors for smoking

4.6 Link:

The PGI application for "West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon" is based upon the attributes of a unique quality product whose specific characteristics are;-

1) Linked to the fish being a "wild" fish and their time spent at sea and the high quality of the river water where the salmon begin their life and return to breed.

2) Linked to the unique traditional method of Welsh coracle fishing which is a traditional method of salmon fishing only legally allowed on the rivers Taf, Tywi and Teifi in West Wales.

Salmon are migratory fish which have the ability to live in fresh water (rivers) and salt waters (sea).The Salmon spawn in fresh water and live for the first few years in the rivers. In early spring each year, they return to the sea to feed and grow. After approximately 2 years, they will return to the river of their birth to start the cycle all over again. A typical female will produce on average 2000 eggs per kilogram (900 eggs per lb.) of body weight at spawning.

Muscle tone would be more developed in wild salmon in comparison to farmed salmon because of the significant distance that wild salmon covers during migration and the high quality of the feeding grounds whilst at sea where their energy reserves are laid down. The superior muscle tone results in a denser texture without excessive fat deposits. These characteristics are preserved by the method of fishing which ensures that the fish are caught in their prime as soon as they enter the river system in the low and tidal waters of the river and before they become characteristically inactive and their reserves are depleted in the environment of the river. This contributes to "West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon" having a more tender distinct strong sweet taste with subtle oily tones which are not overbearing to the palate and the flesh is firm with a dense texture.

The water in the Taf, Tywi and Teifi is of a very high quality and is regularly monitored and recorded by the Environmental Agency. The pollution levels in the three rivers are very low, and they have been awarded grade 'A' status, which

demonstrates that the rivers have '*natural ecosystems and make very good salmonid and cyprinid fisheries'.*

Coracle fishing is an ancient way of fishing for migratory fish. It is an old craft and skill recorded in the 11th Century (and earlier), that has survived into the 21st Century. Although coracles were once used extensively throughout Wales, they are now restricted to the rivers Taf, Tywi and Teifi all in West Wales. Coracle fishing is exclusive to these rivers and has been in existence in one family of coracle fishermen currently fishing on the river Tywi for over 300 years.

Coracle fishing is a cottage industry in West Wales that dates back to the 1800's. Traditionally the coracles are hand-made from ash and willow and are constructed like baskets. Although the design and method of making the coracles has remained unchanged for centuries, developments in modern materials now include the use of calico, canvas and fibreglass in their production

There are 2 main types of coracle which have been specifically engineered to suit the individual tidal characteristics of the 3 rivers. The Tywi Coracle has a streamline design (because the river is wider and the coracle needs to be streamline in order to cross the river quicker;) and the Teifi coracle which has a more stable design necessary for fishing in the rougher faster flowing waters of the river Teifi.

On a print at the Carmarthen Museum, dating from 1794 an indication of the design and covering of a Tywi coracle appears in a verse that reads:

Llangunnor Hill
Upon the glittering stream below,
Those fishermen of courage bold,
In numerous pairs, pursue their trade
In coracles themselves have made;
Form'd of slight twigs with flannel cas'd
O'er which three coats of tar are plac'd
And as a porter bears his pack
Each mounts his vessel on his back.

Historically, different generations of the same family would rely on coracle fishing on these rivers for their livelihoods. In addition to the coracle fishermen, and coracle and net makers, there would be hemp and flax growers and rope makers. At one time there were around 200 coracles on these rivers. In 1807 there were so many coracle fishermen at Cenarth (a village on the river Teifi) that a contemporary observer wrote: 'There is scarcely a cottage in the neighbourhood without its coracle hanging by the door.'

According to one witness to the Royal Commission in 1861, the fish caught by the Tywi coracle men were "salted and sold as dried fish in the town and country and sent away. They used to be hawked about the streets of Carmarthen by the fishermen's wives and by the fishermen and in the country along the side of the Tywi".

'The Coracle' by J. Geraint Jenkins

In 1939, the number of net licences on the rivers was restricted but today you will still see members of the same family coracle fishing the rivers for Salmon.

In conjunction with coracle making, the skill and expertise of net making has also been passed down from one generation to the next. Historically the nets were made from hemp however nowadays net making has evolved with the introduction of nylon.

Another skill associated with coracle fishing and net making, is the unique leading system which is the number and weight of lead weights attached to the coracle nets. The leading system is complex and is based on the Fibonacci series of numbers in nature.(1 x 3 pieces of lead, 4 x 2 pieces of lead, 6 x 1 piece of lead) It is usually taught through practice and is a skill passed down through the generations.

Coracle fishing involves precision steering and navigation whilst controlling the position of the net and remaining buoyant. Knowing which tidal spots to fish and the ability to be able “to read” the river is critical and involves taking factors such as the flow of the river, its depth (depending upon flood water) the tide and wind conditions all into consideration.

The skill of the coracle fisherman is accentuated by the fact that coracle fishing mainly takes place at night under nocturnal conditions. Coracle fishing starts at twilight – which is described in Welsh by coracle fishermen as ‘clyfwchwr’. Fishing takes place mainly at night to prevent the fish seeing the shadow of the coracle or the net coming towards them.

There is an old saying that coracle men have which states – When on a cloudless night, as soon as seven stars appear in the sky, this is when the fishing may begin.

West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon is a recognised quality product that is used by many top chefs and gastronomes and regularly appears as a named ingredient on their menus. In the coracle fishing season the fish regularly appears as a seasonal product on menus at renowned local establishments and are much sought after by both locals and tourists. It is also smoked and used as an ingredient in for example terrines. These products are currently sold to prestigious food outlets in London and throughout the UK. “West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon” is currently sold in the food halls of Harrods London and Fortnum and Mason, London.

Simon Wright food critic of the Good Food Guide

“There are many outstanding foods to be found in this part of Wales but I have no doubt that “West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon” is the one that stands out as being quite unique and in many ways defines the food culture of the region.

It’s not just about the taste, which is peerless, but it’s the whole story, tradition and history that accompany it.”

“West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon when cooked or smoked is rich in flavour has a dense texture, is a deep pink/red in colour and is low in fat. The colour however does slightly vary from fish to fish.”

4.7 Inspection body:

Name: Natural Resources Wales

Address: Natural Resources Wales

Maes Newydd

Llandarcy
Neath Port Talbot
SA10 6JQ

Tel.: 01792 325615
E-mail: david.mee@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

The inspection body conforms to the principles of EN 45011 standard.

4.8 Labelling: