

## OTHER ACTS

## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

**Publication of an application pursuant to Article 17(6) of Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of spirit drinks and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 1576/89**

(2019/C 241/10)

This publication confers the right to oppose the application pursuant to Article 27 of Regulation (EU) 2019/787 of the European Parliament and of the Council <sup>(1)</sup>

## MAIN SPECIFICATIONS OF THE TECHNICAL FILE

**‘NORSK VODKA’/‘NORWEGIAN VODKA’**

**File number: PGI-NO-02240 — 25.11.2016**

**1. Geographical indication to be registered**

‘Norsk Vodka’/‘Norwegian Vodka’

**2. Category of the spirit drink**

Vodka (Category 15 of Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008)

**3. Description of the spirit drink***Principal physical characteristics*

The vodka has a neutral character as defined in the provisions of Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 as incorporated in the EEA Agreement and implemented in § 2 of the Norwegian Regulation 11 October 2006 No 1148 on spirit drinks and aromatised drinks.

The vodka is clear, transparent and colourless.

*Principal chemical characteristics*

The dry matter content is maximum 1 g/l in the finished product, so that the product maintains its purity and distinctiveness. The ethyl alcohol content is at least 37,5 % by volume.

The ethyl alcohol is produced from potatoes or grains, and is mashed, fermented and distilled in Norway. The resulting distillate has no more than 3 g methanol per hectolitre 100 % ethyl alcohol in order to obtain the purest vodka possible. This is 7 g per hectolitre 100 % ethanol stricter than the requirement in Annex I in Regulation (EC) No 110/2008, which has a limit of 10 g per hectolitre 100 % ethanol.

*Principal organoleptical characteristics*

Norsk Vodka/Norwegian Vodka is a pure and organoleptic neutral vodka. This is important, as the character of the pure distillate is the most decisive for product quality. The vodka has a neutral taste with discreet flavour notes of the raw material, making it ideal for various cocktails, and may be enjoyed neat due to its clean palate.

*Specific characteristics compared with spirit drinks of the same category*

Norsk Vodka/Norwegian Vodka has a neutral flavour with a pure and clean taste. The purity of the organoleptical characteristics is a result of the process of production and the flavour/taste philosophy of the Norwegian producers.

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 130, 17.5.2019, p. 1.

#### 4. **Geographical area concerned**

Production of Norsk Vodka/Norwegian Vodka takes place within the borders of the Kingdom of Norway. The ethyl alcohol is distilled in Norway and the vodka is produced in Norway. However, dilution with water in the post-distillation processing and bottling, may take place outside of the Kingdom of Norway.

#### 5. **Method for obtaining the spirit drink**

The production of Norsk Vodka/Norwegian Vodka has three stages, namely brewing, distilling and post-distillation processing. For historical reasons, the raw materials may be imported from overseas. However, the three process stages described below must take place within the demarcated area, except dilution with water in the post-distillation processing and bottling, which may take place outside of the demarcated area.

##### *Brewing*

The raw materials used for production of Norsk Vodka/Norwegian Vodka is potatoes or grain. With grain, the raw materials are mixed with hot water in order to release the starch from the raw material. The potatoes are boiled to make the starch available for the enzymes. Natural enzymes in the form of barley malt or exogenous, starch degrading enzymes are added, creating a sugary liquid ('wash'). The starch in the wash is broken down to sugars by the enzymes and the wash is cooled down. The wash is added cultivated yeast in order to initiate fermentation in which the sugars in the liquid are converted to ethanol, other alcohols and congeners. The use of cultivated yeast in contrast to spontaneous fermentation creates a clean tasting, alcoholic liquid without excessive congeners, giving the finished product a cleaner palate.

##### *Distillation*

The fermented liquid is then distilled in batches or continuously using a column still. In the column still, a flow of wash is passed through a series of plates. Steam is applied at the base of the column, heating the wash to boiling temperatures, thus creating a vapour moving through the perforated plates removing alcohols and congeners from the liquid phase. The alcohol-rich vapour is condensed at the top section of the column. The final spirit has a minimum alcohol content of 96,0 %vol ethanol, containing no more than 3 g methanol per hectolitre 100 % ethanol. Column distillation removes congeners and gives the finished product its clean, soft organoleptic qualities without a burning aftertaste.

##### *Post-distillation processing*

The pure vodka distillate is diluted with water to an alcohol content between 37,5 %vol and 60,0 %vol. The vodka may be added sugar up to a maximum dry content of 1 g per litre in order to soften it. Prior to bottling, the vodka may undergo a production process, e.g. charcoal filtration, which has no other influence than maintaining the vodka's neutral character.

#### 6. **Link with the geographical environment or origin**

Norsk Vodka/Norwegian Vodka has both a reputation and a special quality, which are linked to the demarcated geographical area.

##### *Reputation*

According to documentary evidence of Norwegian spirit production, the distillery tradition in Norway dates back to Bergen in 1531. Bergen was a commercial centre for Norwegian fisheries and the foundation of trading traditions and gastronomical development in Norway. Although Norway at the time was part of the Kingdom of Denmark, rural Norway kept its regional spirit making traditions. When Norwegian harvests were poor and the crops small due to poor climate, potatoes or grain were imported from neighbouring countries. This is the origin of the current raw materials used for making Norsk Vodka/Norwegian Vodka.

In the mid-19th century there were up to 9 000 distilleries in Norway, mainly smaller farm-based distilleries. Norwegian spirit was regarded as an important household commodity and medicinal agent that prevented disease in the cold climate. This led to a heavy alcohol consumption in Norway, and the Norwegian government wanted to reduce the damaging effects of the spirit. The result was a regulation setting a minimum production size for any spirit producer in Norway. This led to farmers joining forces and building larger production cooperatives, investing in better quality distillation equipment with greater capacity than previously. The effect of this was the quality of the spirit increasing, thus settling Norwegian spirit as pure and organoleptically clean.

In 1916, prohibition in Norway outlawed the production and consumption of spirits. When the prohibition was repealed in 1927, the Norwegian government kept control of the Norwegian spirits producers through a state owned production monopoly that overtook the rights to all the previous spirits recipes, equipment and brand rights. 'Vinmonopolet' was established as the Norwegian state-owned alcohol production and sales monopoly. 'Vinmonopolet' set the standard for purification of spirit to be used in Norsk Vodka/Norwegian Vodka, and built its own rectifying plant for rectification/purification of spirit produced in Norway. The 78 years of state-owned monopoly production until 2005 has significantly influenced the tradition of Norwegian spirit, establishing Norsk Vodka/Norwegian Vodka as the high quality, low methanol, low congeners spirit it is today.

An illustration of the importance of the origin of the vodka, is that foreign interests have recently attempted to market a vodka not produced in Norway as Norsk Vodka/Norwegian Vodka. The GI Norsk Vodka/Norwegian Vodka has twice been manufactured and marketed outside the demarcated area for the GI. This clearly shows that the GI Norsk Vodka/Norwegian Vodka is highly esteemed and valued, and that producers outside of Norway want to exploit and make profit on the quality and the reputation of Norsk Vodka/Norwegian Vodka.

Several awards have been presented to Norwegian vodkas at worldwide competitions like International Wine & Spirits Competition, San Francisco World Spirits Competition and International Spirits Challenge.

#### *Special Quality*

##### *Production process*

The fermentation of the raw materials using cultivated yeast, is the key to produce the clean, low methanol spirit.

The stills used in either batch or continuous production mode have plate columns that purify the spirit. The number and physical shape of the plates vary from producer to producer, but all have the common ability of producing a pure spirit, low in methanol.

##### *Human factors*

The competence of the distiller is vital to the operation of the distilling columns. The distiller uses his or her expertise to at any given time during the distillation, regulating the speed of the distillation, which again influences the purity of the finished product.

The competence of the blender with regard to the unique Norwegian vodka formulations in addition to the requirement of only 3 g methanol per hectolitre 100 % ethyl alcohol and maximum 1 g/l dry matter is vital for product quality.

## **7. European Union or national/regional provisions**

The basic requirements are laid down in Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 as incorporated in the EEA Agreement and implemented in § 2 of the Norwegian Regulation 11 October 2006 No 1148 on spirit drinks and aromatised drinks.

The geographical indication Norsk Vodka/Norwegian Vodka has been protected in the EEA (the EU and the EEA/EFTA states) since 1994, in the form of an adaptation text established in Chapter XXVII of Annex II to the EEA agreement, to the provisions of both Regulation (EEC) No 1576/89 and Regulation (EC) No 110/2008.

In Norwegian and English, the geographical indication allows for two different, yet equivalent spellings: Norsk Vodka/Norwegian Vodka.

## **8. Applicant**

Norway  
The Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
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N-0030 Oslo  
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9. **Supplement to the geographical indication**

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10. **Specific labelling rules**

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