

Product Specification for Mazzit

Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)

This document sets out the elements of the product specification for information purposes.

Competent authority

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Applicant group

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Composition: Producers/Processors/Blood Suppliers

Type of product (as in Annex XI Implementing Regulation 668/2014)

Class 1.2 Meat Products (cooked, salted, smoked, etc.)

1. Product name(s)

Mazzit

2. Description

The '*mazzit*' is a sweet and savoury tasting meat product, having as a basis, either swine or male bovine blood. It is cylindrical in shape (sausage-like), weighing up to circa 0.8 kg.

Primarily, apart from blood of the said animals, the '*mazzit*' is encased in swine or bovine intestines, and included a mixture of local onions, raisins, cocoa powder or liquid chocolate, and sugar. In addition to these staple ingredients, producers also add a small quantity of natural sweet flavourings/spices.

The '*mazzit*' is brownish in colour, with a semi-translucent casing of intestine. When sliced, the raisins, the onions, and the zest are visible with a brownish hue. When cold and cut it has a unique moist palatable, solid-crumble texture.

(See Appendix 2.1 for a photograph of the '*mazzit*')

3. Geographical area

Malta - NUTS 3 level MT 001 and MT 002.

4. Proof of origin

All blood for the production of '*mazzit*' is provided by approved abattoirs within the specified geographical area. All the blood is taken from pigs and/or male bovine raised within the geographical area. Once the blood is packed, it is labelled accordingly to ensure traceability of the abattoir from which it is sourced, by the use of batch numbers. Consequently, the blood can then be traced to specific farms through the records kept at the approved abattoirs. The quantity of blood sold in batches would vary by abattoir but the volume of each bag of blood would be specified on the batch number label. All these measures apply to both cooled and warm blood. The selling of warm blood follows the same procedure as above, with the difference being that warm blood has to be used in the production of the '*mazzit*' within four hours of slaughter. (Appendix 2.2 for an example of the label used to ensure traceability and quality of cooled blood, and Appendix 2.3 for an example of a label used for warm blood).

Approved abattoirs would have a list of clients which are approved to purchase blood, owing to the strict hygienic practices in handling it. The blood bought by these approved establishments is then taken to an approved establishment where the '*mazzit*' is produced via traditional Maltese methods. Afterwards it is retailed in butcher shops which have to adhere to the labelling procedure in section 8 of this document in order to ensure full traceability.

5. Method of production

1. **Preparation of mixture to be added to the blood.** Before the blood is made available at the '*mazzit*' producer's production facility, a mixture is prepared using peeled local white onions, raisins, sugar, cocoa powder/liquid chocolate, and other ingredients. This is pan-cooked slowly, till the onions get a brownish colour.
2. **Extraction of blood.** In parallel, the blood is extracted hygienically from either swine (fattener pigs) of any gender or male bovines at an approved abattoir within the geographical area. Fibrin is to be removed from the blood at the said approved abattoir, by stirring by hand or mechanically, whilst observing proper hygiene standards, to avoid coagulation. No additives are to be added. The blood shall be immediately packed into appropriate packaging/containers and dispatched 'warm' (at room temperature) to the mazzit production facility – within a stipulated maximum time of two hours.
3. **Mixing blood with pre-prepared mixture.** Upon arrival of the blood at the mazzit production facility, it is poured into a large non-heated metal container. At this point, within minutes, the mixture (in para 5.1) is blended with the fresh blood and kept at all times at room temperature. In the warmer months, the production area is cooled with air-conditioning equipment to not more than 25°C. The blood constitutes around 55% ±10 of the total mixture. Onions constitute 20% ±5 of the mixture. Sugar constitutes 20% ±5 of the total mixture. The rest of the ingredients, primarily the sweet flavourings/spices constitute the balance up to 10% of the total mixture.
4. **Stuffing.** The blend is then poured into the locally sourced intestines using a funnel or equivalent tool. The intestine-casings are then tied with string to form a cylindrical sausage-like shape. At this stage, the different mazzit are still attached together, with one mazzita separated from the other with string, forming a chain. The mazzit producer, forms each mazzita based on experience, and a rough estimate that upon completion it would weigh circa 0.8 kg.

5. **Finishing.** The mazzit is then put in boiling potable water to cook for about a minute, until it floats. Some producers split the mazzit chain pre-cooking. Others do so later. The finished product is then submerged in salty water (potable water mixed with small amounts of locally sourced salt) and kept refrigerated ready for sale.

(See Appendix 2.4 for a Flowchart of the Production Process)

6. Link with the geographical area

'*Mazzit*' was historically identified as one of the principal sources of protein for the Maltese population, with early twentieth century sources pointing out that it used to be eaten, in particular, but not exclusively on weekends and festivities, as well as to celebrate the end of fasting from meat following the Lenten period.

The earliest historical reference to '*mazzit*' dates back to the mid- eighteenth century, in Gian Francesco Agius De Soldanis's *Damma tal kliem kartaginis mscerred fel fom tal Maltin u Ghaucin* (1750) which not only describes it as an animal blood-based sausage, but also cites the still popular Maltese aphorism: *fl-ahħar tal-mazzita issib iż-żbiba* [literal translation: 'whilst eating a '*mazzita*' one is bound to find a raisin' or 'within the '*mazzit*', one finds the raisin']. Implicitly, this reference confirms the traditional nature of the '*mazzit*', two of its main ingredients as well as its sweet taste (due to the raisins). The fact that the '*mazzit*' was referred to in a proverb, which is still in current usage, is in itself significant. Proverbs and sayings reflect widely accepted socio-cultural values of the society which uses them. They include terms which everyone understands, so much so that they may be used metaphorically. The fact that the said saying has been used for the last 250 years shows cultural familiarity with the terms being used, as well as the metaphorical significance thereof.¹

References become increasingly common thereafter, and include amongst others, Mikiel Anton Vassalli's *Ktýb yl klým Málti, 'mfyссер byl-Latîn u byt-Taljân* (1796). Dictionaries, recipe books as well as sundry recollections of by-gone times refer to the mazzit, its main constituent ingredients, as well as its socio-cultural and nutritional significance for the local population.²

¹ Ramin, Ahmad Tarmizi. "Cultural Values in Traditional Proverbs of Pakpak." *KnE Social Sciences* (2019): 81-93.

² Falzon, Giovanni Battista (1845), *Dizionario maltese-italiano-inglese*. *Dizionario Maltese-Italiano-Inglese: Arricchito Di Nomi Di Botanica, Ittiologia, Ornitologia, E Marineria, Come Pure Di Varie Frasi, Modi Di Dire, E Proverbii; Preceduto Da Una Breve Esposizione Grammaticale Della Lingua Maltese*; Cachia, P. (1966), 'An Arab's view of XIX

The basic ingredients of ‘*mazzit*’ (pig or bovine blood, pig or cow intestines and onions) are all sourced locally. The pig or bull blood, as well as the intestines, are sourced hygienically at an approved slaughterhouse / abattoir, whilst the Maltese onions are bought by the producers themselves, either directly from the farmers who grow them, or from the local Pitkali Market. ‘*Mazzit*’ is generally consumed by all segments of the population³ and was (and still is) produced all over the Maltese islands; with a particular concentration of producers in the southwest of Malta – a sub-region which was relatively close to a number of slaughterhouses including the main slaughterhouse which has been operational in Malta since 1897. It is an area which is also contiguous with the Siggiewi-Fawwara area which was well known for the production of Maltese white onions. Maltese white onions have traditionally been grown on non-irrigated land or land which depends solely on rain for irrigation of crops. The ‘more wild, local variety’ onions was traditionally known for its ability to thrive even in dry soil, and indeed even on garigue and was cultivated for this reason. Furthermore, these semi-wild onions had a longer shelf-life than other varieties.

Historically, the raisins were also locally sourced, with the term *żbib* referring to a variety of grapes popular in the central Mediterranean region, which was dried to produce raisins, though due to extremely limited local supply, imported raisins are being used.

7. Inspection body

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century Malta', *Maltese Folklore Review*, I, 3: 232-43; Cassar Pullicino, J. (1989), 'Antichi cibi maltesi', *Studi di tradizioni popolari maltesi*, 58-85; Kilin, (1985), *Fuq il-Għajn ta' San Bastjan*; Vella, C. (1998), 'Is-Siggiewi fl-ewwel snin ta' dan is-seklu', *Każin Banda San Nikola Siggiewi - Festa 1998*, 57-65.

³ Gambin, Kenneth, and Noel Buttigieg. *Storja Tal-Kultura Ta' l-Ikel F'Malta*. Pubblikazzjonijiet Indipendenza, 2003. Pp. 22 – 23.

8. Labelling

The product is to be labelled '*mazzita*' in the singular or '*mazzit*' in the plural, without any further descriptors.

The product shall follow existing labelling regulations applicable to any food product containing meat as one of its ingredients but with the addition of the term '*mazzit*'. Specifically, whether the '*mazzit*' is sold over the counter or pre-packed, the '*mazzit*' producer shall notify the customer which ingredients are being used in the preparation of that '*mazzit*', including the source of animal blood and which intestine is being used (swine or bovine), as well as the other ingredients. The source of the blood and the intestines, including country of origin of the livestock, and approval numbers of the production plant shall also be specified.