

Production protocol – guidelines Limburgse Stroop

Slow Food International / Slow Food Presidium Limburgse Stroop

ART.1

Name of product

Traditional ‘Limburgse stroop’ – fruit treacle from Limburg (region in the South of the Netherlands)
English: Limburg ‘stroop’
Dutch: (Traditionele en ambachtelijke) Limburgse stroop
Limburg dialect: sjroap, zeem, kruutje and ziepnaat.

ART.2

Production area

The Southern Limburg region of the Netherlands and bordering areas in Belgium (Limburg and Land van Herve) and Germany (Rheinland).

ART.3

Historic Background

The “traditionele en ambachtelijke Limburgse stroop“ has a several century long history. Originally the fruit was processed into ‘stroop’ to preserve the fruit that was gathered in the region and to create a highly caloric bread condiment (spread) to be stocked for and used during the winter. An average family in the region had as much as 50 kgs. of ‘stroop’ in storage and each village had at least one local producer. At the beginning of the 20th century the production of ‘stroop’ progressively became more industrial and this trend increased after World War II. As a result of industrialisation and urbanisation, traditional fruit orchards in Limburg were gradually disappearing. This meant that local fruit varieties were also doomed to vanish, as well as the craft of producing stroop. The efforts of a group of enthusiastic local people, who collected old recipes and learned the old skills, has made it possible to keep alive the art of producing ‘stroop’, with new artisan production facilities having been set up in the area. Old equipment has been restored and it is now used by most of the producers. Currently there are four producers of “traditionele en ambachtelijke Limburgse Stroop“.

The Premium Product is called Herfskeuning (‘Limburgse Stroop’): this is the preferred recipe is the so called ‘Herfskeuning’ : 60% traditional pears and 40% traditional apples. Other blendings with different percentages of pears and apples are possible. After the Napoleonic era sugarbeets were introduced and also syrup consisting sugarbeets and apples became a popular and more comfortable product. The Presidium produces Herfskeuning and sometimes other percentages pears and apples, depending the volumes of suitable fruit which can be harvested. Above that the ‘Rinse’ syrup consisting 75% apples and 25% sugarbeets is produced.) and each year the traditional stroopstokers make a batch of this ‘Grand Cru’. The basic recipe herefore is 60% of traditional pears and 40% of traditional apples. The Herfskeuning is presented on several formal meetings and fairs.

Formerly each family/stroopstoker had its own recipes, and also now the producers have their own preference for different types of pears and apples. Also sugarbeets are used in some special ‘stroops’.

On several regional markets and fairs stroop and the craft of ‘stroop stoken’ is shown to the public. In some museums some stroop production facilities can be seen.

ART.4

Raw material – Description of the fruit variety

“Traditionele en ambachtelijke Limburgse stroop” is made of 60% pears and 40% apples. Most of the fruit is traditional and/or biological . Some producers use only own grown fruit.

The stroop produced in Belgium is somewhat sweeter and it has a higher percentage of pear. Local orchard in Limburg provide the most important ingredients for the production of stroop: traditional apple varieties (*among others Schaapsneus, Gronsvelder Klumpke, Eysdener Klumpke, Goudreinet, Keuleman, Rode Sterappel*) and old pear varieties (*among others Herfstpeer van Geulle, Legipont, Brederode, Bongerspeer, Suikerpeer*). We are preparing a list of traditional varieties from the region, with short description.

The preparation of “traditionele en ambachtelijke Limburgse stroop” requires a correct balance in the use of apples and pears, the use of copper kettles that have to be in direct contact with an open fire (whereas industrial producers use steel kettles heated by hot water or steam), the use of fruit juice that is only roughly filtered (this causes more “body” and a stronger taste) and an uninterrupted production process, without adding any other ingredients.

The producers are also making use of fruit from newer orchards and sugarbeets for some special blends. **The fruit will always be pure and is chosen because of the special tastes.** The fruit and beets are grown on biological basis, and/or without the use of fertilizer and herbicides. A lot of new orchards are planted old style with traditional varieties. Modern orchards will have modern style types and varieties, but will tend biologically.

ART. 5

Cultivation techniques

No herbicides used, unless organic; maintaining the trees by pruning.

Traditional orchards have big fruit trees in meadows. The grass is for sheep or cattle, or can be mown for hay or just be removed. Chemical weed killer is forbidden. Adverse environmental conditions and weeds must be controlled solely by adopting good agronomic practices (i.e. physical and mechanical means).

See guide lines here:

<http://www.fondazioneSlowFood.com/en/researchs/fruit-and-vegetable/>

ART. 6

Treatments and use of fertilizers

No chemical fertilizers or manure is used, no herbicides unless organic.

ART. 7
Ingredients

Apples, pears, sugar-beets only for specific batches. Sometimes special flavours are made by using plums or quince.

An almost complete list of the various traditional types of apples and pears is to be set up in 2021.

ART. 8
Harvest of the raw material

Harvesting by picking by hand from September till November, or gathering after shaking the branches of the trees. The fruit is gathered in bags and crates.

ART. 9
Preservation of the raw material

Storage in crates in open air, out of the sun, or in cold storage rooms.

ART. 10
Description of production process

The bottom of a copper kettle is covered with a small layer of water. Just enough to prevent it from burning. The kettle is then filled with layers of pears and apples, then covered with cloth and heated. Washing of the fruit beforehand is not necessary. The heat creates steam on the bottom of the kettle and this causes the fruit to change its structure within 4 to 6 hours. In the beginning the heat is lower so the fruit releases juice. In this way a layer of fluid prevents the burning of the skin which is not directly in contact with the kettle. By heating the fruits the 'skin' is bursting or loosening. At this stage of the production process the "stropstoker" must continuously check the fire, in order to ensure that its intensity varies depending on the different stages of the cooking process. The fruit pulp generated by the cooking process is then transferred to a wooden press. The pulp has to be placed in layers, with cloth in between. The cloth is used to obtain the most amount of juice out of the pulp. The pressed juice is then roughly filtered and transferred to a copper kettle, where it cooks for several hours (4 to 15, according to volume, heat of the fire and different family recipes), until it is reduced to approximately 15% of the original weight of the fruit. The experienced "stropstoker" can check the correct density of the 'strop' by lifting the stirring rod and letting the strop flow slowly in a "V-shape" drip. Once ready, the 'strop' is immediately put into jars. Good 'strop' can be kept in storage for many years. Legal issues lead to a time limit of five years. In practice the strop can be kept more than 20 years. The top layer will get dry and less fluid..

We use absolutely no additives.

ART.11
Organoleptic characteristics

The finished products has the following qualities:

Color: brown, and depending on the used pear type a red hue, sometimes reddish close to black

Smell: caramelized fruit, sometimes, when fired by wood, possibly a background of wood and smoke.

Taste: sweet, fresh, fruity
Consistency: spreadable, viscous
Extra: ready for use for a long time (up to five years and more)
Perishability: close to zero

ART. 12 Packaging

Glass and pottery jars, pots, containers
Contents between 100 gr. and 10 kg.

ART. 13 Conservation

Very long, up to five years when in stable conditions.
No refrigerating is needed after opening for use.

ART. 14 Labeling

On the label the data of the content is indicated, the year of production, the producer's name and the type of 'stroop'
For the Premium Product of 'Herfskeuning' a special label is designed.
See attached label for the 'Herfskeuning'.
Every year a certain amount of 'Limburgse Stroop' is produced by the members of the Presidium and put in the market under the regular presidium label with also the name of the specific producer.

ART. 15 Quality checks

The Dutch Governmental Institution Nederlandse Voedsel en Waren Authoriteit is in general checking the good and clean production methods, the condition of the fruit, the product and packaging.