

SPECIFICATION

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

“West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin”

EC No:

PDO () PGI ()

1 RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT IN THE MEMBER STATE

UNITED KINGDOM

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2 GROUP

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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 Sewin”

4.2 Description:

“West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin” is the name given to fish of the *Salmo trutta* species, which have been caught using the ancient Welsh traditional method of coracle fishing

Fresh “West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin” are bright silver, with numerous black spots which are located both above and below the lateral line. The flesh of the sewin is firm with good muscle tone and has a fresh fish smell. The colour of the flesh is a distinctive light pale pink colour, although this may vary slightly as sewin will only feed at sea and the colour of its flesh will be affected by its diet which may include Mysids and shrimp.

“West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin” are unique as they are caught as soon as they enter the river systems from the sea in low and tidal waters of the river. An indication of this “freshness” is that when gutted the contents of coracle caught sewin often still contain the components of their sea diet such as sand eels. The fish are fresh, and have superior developed muscle quality resulting in firm flesh with a dense texture. They have a visibly elongated athletic shape, without excessive fatty deposits resulting from their lengthy swim whilst at sea and the high quality feeding grounds available whilst at sea. The overall shape and size of “West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin” will vary due to their wild nature, in addition due to its wild nature, the sewin does not contain any artificial additives or colourings.

The size of the fish varies due to its wild nature. However because of a restrictive net mesh size of 10cms, the minimum size for “West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin” would be 1kg as any fish smaller in size would escape through the net and a maximum size of 10kgs.

“West Wales Coracle caught Sewin” has perfect markings, (bright silver with numerous black spots) is quite round and thick set. It should be free from distortion to its tail, fins or head. The fork of its tail is usually square or convex. The wrist of the tail is broad and it is difficult to pick up the fish by its tail alone and the upper jaw extends beyond the rear edge of the eye. As coracle fishing catches sewin singularly and not in multiples “West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin” is not as susceptible to bruising, flesh damage and other distortions that can occur when other farmed or drift net sewin. This contributes to the eating quality of “West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin” with its pristine firm flesh and dense texture

When cooked “West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin” has a soft subtle distinctive “buttery” taste with slightly “nutty” undertones and has a unique soft & clean fresh flavour. The flesh is firm with a dense texture.

“West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin” are primarily sold whole and mostly freshly caught, although the Sewin 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 420205 and 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 and 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 Sewin” 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 Sewin and it is mandatory to place the tag in the fish gill prior to landing.

Each Log book records:

- I) Tag numbers
- II) Date of catch
- III) Size/Weight of the fish

The tags show the fish number and the coracle number, so 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 Sewin” 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 Sewin” are caught by coracle fishermen during the Sewin season which varies according to the river from which it is caught.

The coracle fishing season for Sewin differs according to the river being fished.

- On the Tywi the season runs from the 1st March to 31st July
- On the Teifi the season runs from the 1st April to 31st August
- On the Taf the season runs from the 1st March to 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 sewin 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 Sewin travel to its spawning ground along the beds of the rivers following the contours of the river. 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 first 18 inches from the bed of the river. Any fish above that level will escape capture because the sewin 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) Sewin are caught using a traditional hand-made net. Coracle fishing involves a pair of coracles working together, with a net suspended between them as described above.
- II) Sewin are tagged on board coracle with a plastic tag inserted through the gill of each Sewin. The tag is placed in the fish gill prior to landing. Each tag correlates to the specific coracle which has caught the fish.
- III) Sewin are taken to shore in the coracle. The Sewin are then weighed on landing, & logged in the log book which is issued to each licensed coracle fisherman.
- IV) The Sewin is transported to storage where they are iced in a cool box or stored in a fridge at a temperature of 0°C- 4°C
- 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 or forwarded to fish processors for smoking

4.6 Link:

The PGI application for “West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin” 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 sewin begin their life and return to breed.
- 2) Linked to the unique traditional method of Welsh coracle fishing which is a traditional method of sewin fishing only legally allowed on the rivers Taf, Tywi and Teifi in West Wales.

Welsh sea trout (sewin) are migratory fish which have the ability to live in fresh water (rivers) and salt waters (sea). The sewin 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. The fish only return to the river to spawn.

Muscle tone would be more developed in wild sewin/sea trout in comparison to farmed brown trout because of the significant distance that wild sewin/sea trout cover 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 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 energy reserves are depleted in the river environment. This contributes to “West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin” having a soft, subtle distinctive

“buttery” taste with slightly “nutty” undertones a unique fresh flavour with firm flesh and 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*’. The sources of all 3 rivers are either deep in the Cambrian or Preseli mountains and all 3 rivers have a rural catchment area dominated by grassland and forestry. Both the Tywi and Teifi rivers have been classed as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). The high quality of the river water contributes to the size of the sewin and the fact that “West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin” should have perfect markings and no distortion to its head, fins or tail.

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 three Principle Rivers – the rivers Tywi, Teifi and Taf all in West Wales. Coracle fishing is exclusive to these rivers and has been in existence 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 coracle making has remained unchanged for centuries, developments in modern materials now include the use of calico, canvas and fibreglass.

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 more 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 some 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 and today you will still see members of the same family fish the rivers for sewin.

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 a 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 Sewin" is a quality product that is used by many top chefs and gastronomes. The fish regularly appears as a seasonal product on menus at renowned local establishments and are much sought after by locals and tourists."West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin" is often sold smoked and sold to prestigious food halls in London such as Harrods and Fortnum and Mason..

Andrew Luck – Local Chef to the River Towy.

'As a chef, it is exciting for me to see the first "West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin" of the Season come in fresh from the coracles of West Wales. "West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin" is a great fish for chefs to use, not just for its unique fresh flavour and dense texture – but for the story it tells and the history and tradition behind it.

It's a pleasure to have on the menu and to know exactly where it has come from.

"West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin" is a superior fish and when smoked or cooked it can show its true diversity.'

4.7 Inspection body:

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

4.8 Labelling: