

## Technical file

**‘Steinhäger’ (PGI-DE-01931)**

Date of receipt (DD/MM/YYYY)

*[to be completed by the Commission]*

Number of pages (including this page): - 8 -

Language used for submission of application: German

File number

*[to be completed by the Commission]*

**Geographical indication to be registered: ‘Steinhäger’**

**Category of the spirit drink:** Juniper-flavoured spirit drinks

### **Description of the spirit drink**

Steinhäger is a spirit drink produced exclusively in the municipality of Steinhagen and flavoured with *wacholderlutter* (fermented juniper berries). The raw materials which characterise the product are ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin or grain distillate, *wacholderlutter* from fermented juniper mash and a small quantity of juniper berries.

- Physical, chemical and organoleptic characteristics:

Actual alcoholic strength of the ready-to-drink product: at least 38 % vol.

Clarity: clear

Colour: colourless

Smell: mild to powerful juniper notes

Taste: soft and mild, of juniper

Authorised food additives or other substances: none, with the exception of water to reduce to drinking strength.

- Specific characteristics (compared to other spirit drinks of the same category)

- = The alcohol used to produce 'Steinhäger' (ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin or grain distillate) is flavoured exclusively with juniper berries known by the botanical name *Juniperus communis* L. (the 'common juniper'), only by means of distillation and not simply by maceration.
- = *Wacholderlutter*, which is itself produced from fermented juniper berries, must always be used for distilling the alcohol (see 'method for obtaining the spirit drink').
- = At 38 % rather than 30 % by volume, 'Steinhäger' has a higher minimum alcohol content than products of the 'juniper-flavoured spirit drinks' category, which brings out the organoleptic characteristics of the juniper berries more strongly.
- = Colourings are not added.
- = Sweeteners are not added to the distillate or finished product.

**Geographical area concerned:**

'Steinhäger' must be produced only in the eastern Westphalian municipality of Steinhagen, which lies on the southern slopes of the Teutoburg Forest in North Rhine-Westphalia.

Production (in this sense) does not include the addition of water for reducing to drinking strength, bottling or packaging.

**Method for obtaining the spirit drink:**

The most important difference between 'Steinhäger' and other spirit drinks containing juniper is that *wacholderlutter* must always be used to produce it, i.e. its typical aroma derives principally from *wacholderlutter*.

The first stage is to produce the *wacholderlutter*. Generally only dried juniper berries are used for this purpose. These are usually crushed beforehand and since they contain no juice, are, as a rule, mashed in a fermentation vat or tank with roughly twice as much warm water. Due to the relatively high content of essential oils and resinous substances, fermentation of the mash is difficult. For this reason, selected yeasts and fermentation aids are commonly added. Fermentation is slow and intermittent, and takes at least 8 to 9 days, although its completion generally requires 14 days. No neutralising or fining agents are added to the mash. The fermented juniper berry mash, to which a small quantity of unfermented juniper berries is sometimes added, is then distilled in a special wash still, where the juniper berry distillate

reaches an alcohol content no greater than 15 % by volume. The term *wacholderlutter* therefore means the initial yield, or first distillation, in a wash still, of the fermented juniper berry mash with an alcohol content no greater than 15 % by volume.

The *wacholderlutter*, ‘alcohol’, water and generally a small quantity of unfermented juniper berries are then poured into a still which is operated continuously or periodically and are distilled together. The ‘alcohol’ used is ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin (known as neutral alcohol or rectified spirit), grain fine distillate or other cereal crop fine distillate or finely filtered ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin.

The resulting alcohol and distillate, which have the organoleptic properties of juniper berries, are stored in suitable containers prior to completion of the process. Only storage containers that do not colour the product are used.

The production process is then completed by carrying out the following steps:

- (possibly) blending of different juniper distillates,
- dilution of the high alcohol distillate(s) to drinking strength with water,
- pouring of the spirit into bottles (generally dark glass or stoneware, to protect the aroma) or into other suitable sales containers, and
- labelling and packaging.

With the exception of blending, these final stages may take place outside Steinhagen.

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

- Details of the geographical area or origin relevant to the link:

The reputation of ‘Steinhäger’ as a typical German spirit drink is borne out by numerous historical documents, literary works and early legal provisions.

The name ‘Steinhäger’ stems from the spirit drink’s place of production, i.e. the eastern Westphalian municipality of Steinhagen on the southern slopes of the Teutoburg Forest, in Ravensberg Land.

There is a long tradition of producing ‘Steinhäger’.

According to the inaugural dissertation by H. Schlichte (*Das Branntweingewerbe in Steinhagen. Inaugural-Dissertation*, Hamburg, 1924) – as specifically referred to in the reference work *Trinkbranntweine und Liköre*, Wüstenfeld/Haeseler, 2nd edition, 1950) – a beverage made from juniper berries was already being produced in Steinhagen in the 15th

century. According to the dissertation: *‘This is quite understandable given that due to their high essential oil content, juniper berries have long been used as an established household remedy for all kinds of illnesses and, at that time, were gathered in considerable quantities from the slopes of the Teutoburg Forest and from the broad heaths. Producing Steinhäger was initially a specialised craft, which only saw limited development due to numerous official restrictions. The fact that in his trade edict, the Great Elector (of Prussia) gave the Steinhäger village exceptional permission to produce Steinhäger in home distilleries, can be seen as a sign of the particular appreciation for this spirit drink. It is even believed that he was given a jug of Steinhäger on his first visit to Ravensberg Land.’*

During the second half of the 19th century, there were 20 local distilleries in Steinhagen, producing ‘Steinhäger’ as a spirit drink flavoured with juniper berries. Renowned family businesses based in Steinhagen, distributing their brands throughout Germany and exporting to all continents, made ‘Steinhäger’ world-famous.

An important characteristic of ‘Steinhäger’ is that it is often marketed in a long, brown stoneware bottle known as a ‘Kruke’ or colloquially as a ‘Betonbuddel’. However, bottles made of other materials are also used.

The publication *Die Welt des Steinhägers* by Helmut Dellbrügge, published by Haller Kreisblatt Verlags GmbH, strongly emphasises the origin of ‘Steinhäger’ and its historical significance to the municipality of Steinhagen.

Between 1959 and 1969, the boom period of the ‘Steinhäger’ distilleries, there were 2 500 people working in the sector.

A standardised quality rule for ‘Steinhäger’ was first laid down in the second subparagraph of Section 102 of the Spirit Monopoly Act of 8 April 1923:

*‘Only potable alcohol produced solely through distillation, using wacholderlutter from fermented juniper berry mash, may be marketed under the name ‘Steinhäger’.*

Furthermore, Section 100(3) of the Spirit Monopoly Act established a minimum alcohol content of 38 % by volume for ‘Steinhäger’.

– Specific characteristics of the spirit drink attributable to the geographical area:

The soil and climate conditions in the region around Steinhagen on the southern slopes of

the Teutoburg Forest, in Ravensberg Land, led to a prevalence of juniper groves in the Teutoburg Forest region, still partly found there to this day. Rye and wheat similarly flourished and continue to flourish across the whole of Westphalia. There is no longer a legal obligation to use either juniper berries from the region or ‘alcohol’ from rye or wheat produced in the region.

In Steinhagen, production of the spirit drink speciality, ‘Steinhäger’, is part of the history of the municipality. On the Steinhagen coat of arms, which is divided into three parts, the golden upper right half with its blue juniper branch is a reference to ‘Steinhäger’, immortalising this regional speciality.

Steinhagen is also home to a historical museum which contains the distilling apparatus from a former ‘Steinhäger’ distillery. The Museum Association distils particular specialities there on a seasonal basis, including the *Steinhäger Museumsbrand* (‘Steinhäger’ museum spirit). The exhibition in the historical museum impressively highlights how the production and marketing of ‘Steinhäger’ brought economic power and wealth to the municipality. When production in the flax and textile industry came to an end at the beginning of the 19th century, ‘Steinhäger’ provided a source of income for many families and put bread on their tables.

Along with the historical museum, the Annette Schlichte Steinhäger Foundation also works to preserve the memory of ‘Steinhäger’ as a speciality spirit drink.

The quality and reputation of ‘Steinhäger’ are based on a tradition of distilling in Steinhagen which dates back centuries. The know-how of ‘Steinhäger’ producers has therefore been honed over the centuries.

As noted by the Westphalian Economic Archive Foundation, one renowned company which still produces ‘Steinhäger’ in Steinhagen was recognised for its products at two World Fairs (Chicago 1893 and Paris 1900).

Following the Second World War, the reputation of ‘Steinhäger’ spread throughout Germany thanks to television advertising and announcements in the print media for individual brands. This made ‘Steinhäger’ one of the most highly-demanded spirit drinks in Germany. Certain advertising slogans, e.g. *Trinke ihn mäßig, aber regelmäßig* [drink in moderation, but steady moderation] became familiar to the general public.

‘Steinhäger’ had such a good reputation in Germany but also e.g. in Brazil, that companies located outside Steinhagen began producing ‘Steinhäger’, undermining its regional protection. Consequently, until 14 December 1989, previous German legislation on spirit drinks distinguished between original products from Steinhagen, marketed as

*Echter Steinhäger* (real Steinhäger) or *Original Steinhäger* (original Steinhäger), and products originating from outside Steinhagen.

The Doble W. distillery in Brazil has produced ‘Steinhäger’ since 1962. According to the manufacturer, the same ingredients as used in Germany, and the original dosages, in particular of juniper berries, are used.

Since the entry into force of the first European Regulation on spirit drinks on 15 December 1989 (Regulation (EEC) No 1576/89), ‘Steinhäger’ has been a geographical indication.

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

EU and German horizontal food law and specific EU and German federal legislation on spirits apply to the production and marketing of ‘Steinhäger’.

### **Applicant**

- Member State: Federal Republic of Germany
- Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture  
Rochusstraße 1, D-53123 Bonn, Germany  
Tel.: 0049 (0)228 99 529-0  
Fax: 0049 (0)228 99 529-4262  
Email: [poststelle@bmel.bund.de](mailto:poststelle@bmel.bund.de)

### **Supplement to the geographical indication**

#### **Specific labelling rules**

##### a) Basic rules on supplements to the geographical indication ‘Steinhäger’:

In accordance with EU spirit drinks legislation, the indication ‘Steinhäger’ is supplemented only by

- the terms specified under (b); or
- terms other than those specified under (b) which can be shown to have been in common use on 20 February 2008.

##### b) Supplements with non-geographical terms:

- With effect from 15 December 1989, ‘Steinhäger’ became a protected EU geographical

indication. Consequently, the terms ‘original’ and ‘real’ may no longer be used because they represent an implicit claim recognised under the general principles of food law as being misleading to consumers.

- If the designation ‘Steinhäger’ is qualified with age indications such as ‘old’ etc., the product must have been stored in suitable containers for at least six months.
- If quality terms (e.g. ‘fine’ or ‘table’) are added to the name ‘Steinhäger’, the product must be of significantly higher quality than standard variants. For example, in comparison to standard products, such products may be distinguished by particular organoleptic properties such as a particularly mild or soft flavour, a higher alcohol content than the legal minimum, use of a higher proportion of juniper *wacholderlutter* during production or particular storage conditions.
- Products made entirely, i.e. distilled, reduced to drinking strength and bottled, at a single plant may also be labelled with the additional words ‘distilled and bottled at the distillery’.

## **Scope**

This technical file is considered to be the generally accepted position of the commercial operators concerned from the date of its publication on the website of the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food.