

TECHNICAL FILE

Date of receipt...

Number of pages: 6

Language used for submission of application: Swedish

File number ...

Geographical indication to be registered

Svensk Vodka/Swedish Vodka

Category of the spirit drink

Vodka

Description of the spirit drink

- Physical, chemical and/or organoleptic characteristics

Svensk Vodka, which belongs to the 'vodka' spirit category, is a clear, colourless drink that has an alcohol content of between 40 and 60 per cent by volume, a dry matter content of 1.0 gram per hectolitre and a maximum methanol content of 5 grams per hectolitre of alcohol (100 per cent by volume). It has a slight but perceptible taste of grain or potato, which distinguishes it from an entirely neutral spirit.

Svensk Vodka is usually unsweetened, but sucrose may be added at a maximum level of 2 grams per litre in order to round off the taste. Traditionally the drink has been consumed principally neat following meals, often in addition to other meal-time drinks, but nowadays also as an ingredient in other drinks. Its smooth and mild character makes Svensk Vodka suitable for blending with juices and other fruit drinks.

A vodka's character depends fundamentally on the raw materials used for the distillation, the water used for the mixing and the mixer's exact recipe and professional skills. Swedish agricultural land has a long history and was characterised by subsistence farming well into the 19th century. The Swedish climate, with its short, light and relatively cool summers and relatively long, cold and dark winters, provides special growing conditions that affect the type of crops and cereals grown and the quality of the raw materials and the way they are handled, which in turn gives a unique quality to the spirit raw material of Svensk Vodka.

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

The alcoholic strength, distillation quality, spirit raw materials and added water give Svensk Vodka, in comparison with other vodkas from traditional vodka countries, a smooth flavour with no burning aftertaste. Instead, the drink has a smooth and soft texture, or mouthfeel.

The clarity - i.e. the total absence of turbidity - in Svensk Vodka is a result of the high distillation quality and the pure, clear water.

Water makes up a large portion, around 40-60 per cent, of Svensk Vodka. As the ethyl alcohol is distilled at 96 per cent by volume, this weakens the nature of the spirit raw material to a large extent and therefore the added water is of great importance to the quality and nature of Svensk Vodka. Sweden is known for its clean environment compared to other countries, for its rich water resources on land and in lakes and for its pure, high-quality water. Where groundwater is used in Svensk Vodka, Sweden's climate and geology, in particular the many eskers created by the inland ice, contribute to the good availability of naturally pure, tasty and easily abstracted groundwater. *However, it is not necessary for the water to come from an esker.* The groundwater has a low content of organic substances, a good microbiological quality and an even, low temperature and requires only simple processing in the waterworks. In accordance with Swedish regulations on drinking water, chlorination is limited. Sweden also has stricter rules for the presence of actinomyces in drinking water. *Svensk Vodka's reputation is based on the expectation that the blending with Swedish water traditionally takes place in Sweden. It is this crucial step that gives Svensk Vodka its final character.*

Geographical area

The territory of Sweden

Method for obtaining the spirit drink

In addition to the general rules for vodka in Regulation (EC) No 110/2008, Svensk Vodka is also subject to the requirements below.

All ethyl alcohol used to make Svensk Vodka must have been produced in Sweden from wheat, rye, barley, oat or potatoes cultivated in Sweden.

In the 1800s a process for continuous distillation was developed that became crucial for the quality and purity of Svensk Vodka, and it is the principal technique still today. In former times, distillation was carried out at single distilleries/pot stills, as is done still today in a modified form, mainly in small-scale production using columns to reach a content of 96 per cent by volume. The introduction of continuous distillation created the technical conditions for producing pure spirits of high quality, where it is possible to preserve the unique character of the raw material by selecting specific process parameters. In the first stage of distillation, the ethanol formed during fermentation is separated from the mash in a stripping column, after which, in a second stage, the ethanol is concentrated in a raw spirit column. The resulting raw spirit, which has an ethanol content of 80-90 per cent by volume and also contains volatile substances, fusel oils and heavier fractions, is then distilled continuously in several separate columns, where each column consists of a large number of trays, so that these unwanted impurities can be separated and removed in a controlled manner. In continuous distillation, the process is usually configured with an extraction column, a rectification stage and a methanol column in order to reach a final ethanol strength of 96 per cent by volume and high product quality. Through advanced and optimised processes, at least part of the flavouring substances typical of the raw material can be preserved to give the spirit the desired and specific character.

A special feature of the manufacturing process is to add some flavour from the raw material to the vodka after distillation in order to endow it with the raw material's character. The rectification and the blending with water must take place in Sweden. The water used must be of Swedish origin.

The Swedish origin of the spirit raw material and the water are essential to Svensk Vodka's internationally recognised high quality and good reputation. Svensk Vodka has traditionally been produced in Sweden, and therefore consumers expect the spirit raw materials and the water to be of Swedish origin.

Link with the geographical environment or origin

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

A vodka's character depends fundamentally on the raw materials used for the distillation, the water used for the mixing and the mixer's exact recipe and professional skills.

For a long time, Svensk Vodka has been marketed both in Sweden and internationally as an entirely Swedish product, in other words, the ethyl alcohol and water are of Swedish origin and all the production steps take place in Sweden. These circumstances have given Svensk Vodka a 'seal of excellence' that has been crucial for the appreciation of Svensk Vodka and its good reputation among consumers and in the sector and consequently for its international success. There is no doubt that consumers expect Svensk Vodka to contain Swedish water. In order to maintain and strengthen Svensk Vodka's good reputation in international markets and secure a high quality, it is crucially important to use only Swedish water in the product and to carry out the blending with water in Sweden. Since in many markets Swedish origins have become an indicator of good quality vodka, there is a non-negligible risk that vodkas produced entirely or partly locally on other markets will try to benefit from the reputation of Swedish vodkas. Vodka that is based on worse raw materials, water and processes usually has a burning aftertaste. By reserving the protected indication Svensk Vodka for vodka where every step in the manufacturing process takes place in Sweden in compliance with traditional Swedish requirements, consumers' justified expectations regarding the drink's quality and origin are met. This reduces the risk of consumers being misled.

Absolut Vodka was the first Swedish vodka launched in earnest worldwide, starting in the United States in 1979. Owing to its high, pure quality, Absolut Vodka created a premium segment for vodka, and the premium segment accounts for an increasingly large portion of the entire vodka segment. Thanks to its unique design, the marketing of Absolut Vodka gained much attention, and over the years it has received a number of international prizes and acknowledgements, see [Annexes 1 and 2](#). Svensk Vodka has benefited from the marketing of Absolut Vodka and come to be considered an entirely Swedish product, in other words it is based exclusively on wheat grown in Sweden and on Swedish water and it is produced and bottled entirely in Sweden. In the wake of Absolut Vodka's success and following the abolition of the State producer monopoly in 1994, a number of new vodka varieties have been introduced in Sweden. Those promoted internationally include Kanon Vodka, Karlsson Vodka and Purity Vodka. The latter trade mark has been awarded over 100 gold medals for

quality and taste in the super and ultra-premium categories at the main international spirits competitions in America, Asia and Europe (see Annex 3).

Distillation know-how arrived in Sweden around the 1500s. It had to be adapted to the raw materials that were available in Sweden, in other words, the cereal species growing in a northern climate. The product was usually called 'brännvin', a type of spirit drink. Once the cultivation of potatoes was introduced in Sweden, they, too, soon started being used to make 'brännvin'. During wars and other times of deprivation, also other raw materials have been used, though they were always seen as emergency solutions of a lower quality.

With increased export and import activities in the 1900s, the internationally better known name 'vodka' entered the Swedish language. Over time, 'vodka' came to have a more specific meaning within the wider concept of 'brännvin'.

In former times, the role of 'brännvin' was to preserve the seasonal raw materials as well as to provide energy for hard work and facilitate the digestion of predominantly fatty and preserved food. Over time, the drink started being consumed in addition to another meal-time drink or used as an ingredient when mixing drinks consumed before meals or outside meals. Both pure vodka and spiced 'brännvin' form an important part of traditional meals and festivities in Sweden and are often enjoyed with traditional dishes.

During much of the 20th century, from 1917 to 1994, the right to produce spirit drinks was held by a State monopoly in Sweden. The monopoly rights were held by a company wholly owned by the Swedish State, which took over and continued the production of existing Swedish spirit trademarks and also developed and launched new products. The monopoly period left a profound mark on Swedish spirit production, both with regard to the spirit raw material, usually cereals or potatoes grown in Sweden, and the production process, where *Swedish water was used exclusively* and all steps from distillation to the bottling of the finished product are carried out in Sweden. Production was regulated during that period principally by the State, which governed the monopoly, and on the basis of agreements between the State and Sweden's farmers, primarily through the 1934 agricultural agreement but also through other regulations, including the Swedish National Food Agency's Notice SLV FS 1993:39 with provisions and general advice on spirit drinks.

In Sweden's EEA Agreement, which preceded EU membership, Sweden reserved certain rights to limit what could be sold under the indication 'vodka'. The protected indication 'Svensk Vodka' was introduced when Sweden joined the European Union, among other reasons in order to distinguish between the stricter Swedish approach to defining vodka and the broader definition applied in the EU.

- Specific characteristics of the spirit drink attributable to the geographical area

The long tradition of using only spirit raw materials grown in Sweden and of carrying out all production steps exclusively in Sweden is characteristic of Svensk Vodka and the basis of its Swedish and international reputation.

Sweden belongs to the 'vodka belt' together with a number of countries in Northern Europe, primarily Norway, Finland, Russia, the Baltic States, Poland and Belarus, where vodka has traditionally dominated alcohol consumption. Common to these 'Old-World' vodkas is that distillation has primarily aimed at removing impurities and not the character of the raw material. Local variations regarding spirit raw materials, distillation methods, flavourings and recipes as well as the qualities of the water have led to distinct differences in vodkas from these different countries. In Norway, potatoes are the most common raw material. Polish vodka has largely been based on rye and potatoes. Russian vodka is mainly based on rye and wheat. Swedish vodka is made mostly from wheat, but barley, rye and potatoes are also present. Vodkas produced in Western Europe and the New World generally have a neutral taste and aroma, in other words, the raw material's character is of secondary importance.

European Union or national/regional provisions

Regulation (EC) No 110/2008

Applicant

Sweden

Supplement to the geographical indication

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Specific labelling rules

Svensk Vodka must be labelled with the words 'Svensk Vodka' or 'Swedish Vodka' or in both languages.

For vodkas whose production is linked to Sweden but that do not meet all of the requirements for 'Svensk Vodka', there is the possibility to express the link to Sweden for example with the words 'tillverkad i Sverige' ('produced in Sweden'), on condition that the rules on indicating the country of origin in different markets are followed.