



## **Speck Alto Adige PGI, a unique regional specialty loved by even the most discriminating palates**

Speck Alto Adige PGI is a lightly smoked ham cured in the pure open air, a treatment that gives it an unmistakable appearance and taste. The natural ingredients processed according to tradition give rise to a typical regional specialty that is gathering acclaim from an ever increasing number of Italian consumers.

### **The strong ties with its land of origin**

Speck Alto Adige PGI owes its special character to its strong ties with its land of origin, South Tyrol, where the especially favourable climate of the Alpine valleys, featuring plenty of sun and fresh air, plays a key role in its production. Speck originates from the merging of two different meat conservation methods: curing, typical of the raw ham of the Mediterranean area, and smoking, typical of Northern Europe. In this way, South Tyrol (Alto Adige in Italian), the crossways between these two cultures, has created a local, unmistakable product with unique taste and unique production method based on the ancient rule of "a little salt, a little smoke and a lot of fresh air".

Speck goes far back in time. The very first documents, mentioning the existence of speck as a product derived from the need to preserve throughout the year the meat of the pigs butchered at Yuletide, date back to 1200. In South Tyrolean history, speck was a farmer's fare and a source of energy during their long hours of work in the fields.

Over time it became one of the main courses for feasts and banquets and today it is still the main ingredient of the South Tyrolean snack served together with bread and wine.

### **The long road towards becoming a specialty**

Speck Alto Adige PGI is a top quality typical product derived from only the best ingredients, from the special care taken in producing it and from the know-how of South Tyrolean producers. The traditional production method is based on the ancient rule of "a little salt, a little smoke and a lot of fresh air".

The first key factor in the production of top quality speck is the raw material: only lean, firm pork hind quarters coming from renowned and controlled farms of a State member of the European Union are used to make Speck Alto Adige PGI.

The hind quarters are selected according to the criteria defined in the raw materials specifications and trimmed following traditional methods. They are branded with the date of production start, as an inerasable guarantee and a reference for later inspections.

The speck hams are covered in a special mixture of spices, salt, pepper, juniper, rosemary and laurel. Each producer's mixture is a jealously kept secret recipe handed down from generation to generation through the centuries.

They are then dry-corned for three weeks at controlled temperatures and turned over various times to help the corning penetrate. The final salt content must never exceed 5%.

Then the hams are alternately lightly smoked over slightly resinous wood and exposed to the clean, fresh mountain air. Finally, throughout the ageing period that usually lasts about 22 weeks, the hams are left to hang in rooms pervaded by clean, fresh air. During this time a natural layer of aromatic mould forms on the speck that, in addition to preventing it from becoming excessively dry, enriches it with its unmistakable and elegantly spiced aroma.



### **Quality control**

Speck Alto Adige PGI is a product protected by the European Union through the "PGI" brand that stands for "Protected Geographical Indication". This status is assigned only to selected products obtained according to traditional methods and in specific geographical areas. The Speck Alto Adige seal, the typical green label, stands for quality control and ensures product genuineness. Not all of the speck produced in South Tyrol can bear the "Speck Alto Adige PGI" seal, however: only the speck that meets the criteria imposed by the production specifications and has passed all of the demanding quality tests can be packaged with the quality seal featuring the typical green label.

To guarantee the quality and authenticity of Speck Alto Adige PGI, the quality consortium Consorzio Tutela Speck Alto Adige, together with the independent control institute INEQ (Istituto Nord Est Qualità), has developed an inspection system applied to all production phases, from raw meat selection to the finished product.

### **Production data**

The total output of speck by official producers in Italy in 2009 amounted to 5.5 million hams (25 million kilos), of which 2.2 million hams (10 million kilos) qualified to bear the "Speck Alto Adige PGI" seal, namely 40% of the overall production.

### **The Speck Alto Adige PGI markets**

The main market for Speck Alto Adige PGI has always been northern Italy, although it is one of South Tyrol's main export articles towards southern Germany and Austria (34% of exports), where it is found in most of the best meat and charcuterie shops (data for 2009). The markets of northern Germany, southern Italy, France, Benelux, Switzerland and central/eastern European countries are recently increasing their imports of speck, however. Outside European borders, the United States of America, Japan and other markets where the demand for traditional European quality products is strong are also important channels.

### **The key ingredient of tasty moments**

Thanks to its unmistakable taste and its excellent nutrition properties, Speck Alto Adige PGI is growing in popularity and becoming a star of modern nutrition. According to the most recent market surveys (source: DEMOSKOPEA, 2010) one of the main reasons for speck consumption is precisely its "unique taste" together with its "smoky" flavour. Another reason for the growing consumption of speck is that it is considered a lean type of cured meat. Other important decisive factors in the purchase of the product are the genuineness of its ingredients and the tradition of its area of origin.

One of the strong points of Speck Alto Adige PGI is the fact that its uniqueness is enhanced by its surprising versatility, such as to make it a popular ingredient in the preparation of traditional dishes as well as a tasty addition to modern recipes.



### **Surprisingly versatile**

Speck is normally associated to the typical “baffa” (ham), although recent consumer trends have guided Speck Alto Adige PGI producers to roll out formats that more closely meet the various requirements of the market. Today, in fact, speck is sold as whole hams, ham portions or pre-sliced, fresh or vacuum packed. The various formats now available are made to satisfy the needs of a wide assortment of purchasers and consumers, ranging from small families to restaurants and retailers.

Speck Alto Adige PGI is also a versatile product in terms of consumption: it can be cut into small pieces by hand on a cutting board or sliced thinly with the slicing machine, it can be served with or without the outer rind, it can be diced or cut julienne. Indeed, each method provides its own particular taste and chewing sensation.