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Georgian Qvevri Granted Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)

Qvevri are the first non-food to be added to the State Register of Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications of Goods

New York, NY / June 28, 2021: The National Wine Agency of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Country of Georgia reports that qvevri (*pronounced KWEH-vree*) are the first non-agricultural product to ever be added to the Georgian State Registry of Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). This PGI legally establishes Georgia as the place of origin of qvevri, as well as codifies their shapes, capacities, raw materials, and production methods.

The Georgian State Register of Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) aligns with the EU classification system. Similar to the French system, the PGI designation is akin to a VDP (Vin de Pays) classification. Now under PGI regulation, only raw materials obtained in Georgia shall be used for the production of qvevri.

Qvevri are large clay vessels—often 1,000 or more liters—which buried up to their necks to keep temperatures constant during fermentation and aging. In the traditional method, winemakers ferment the juice and skins together, and the skin contact turns what would otherwise be white wines into amber wines with tannins (some outlets have nicknamed these wines “orange wines”). Winemakers use qvevri to ferment red grapes as well as white grapes. The qvevri are also used to age and store wines.



Figure 1 Handmade qvevri in production. Photo credit: J.Peterson/Marq Wine Group

The Chairman of the [National Intellectual Property Center of Georgia \(Sakpatenti\)](#), Mr. Mindia Davitadze, explains: “Georgia is the archaeologically proven birthplace of wine, and Georgians have made wine in qvevri continuously for 8,000 years, so awarding the PGI was a natural decision...as wines made in qvevri are overwhelmingly made following ancient practices.”

The [Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture](#), Mr. Levan Davitashvili, reported: “With the rising popularity of amber and natural wines, the demand for qvevri wine is on the rise in Georgia and internationally. For example, over the last five years qvevri wine exports to the U.S. grew an average of over 34%. Now we even see wines made in qvevri being made there (as well as in Italy, Slovenia, and many other countries). The new qvevri PGI should further increase demand for Georgian wine overall, as well as raise its value and facilitate global promotion of Georgian wine.”

Qvevri are made by hand by Georgia's master potters. In 2013, the United Nations had added qvevri winemaking to the UNESCO list documenting humanity's [intangible cultural heritage](#).

More about Georgian Wines and Winemaking

The country of Georgia (capital: Tbilisi) sits on the eastern edge of the Black Sea, at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. This tiny country – slightly smaller than Connecticut – is a hotspot of bio-diversity, with topography ranging from tropical to alpine. It is about 1,000 km due east of Rome, and is bordered by Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey, and the Black Sea.

Scholars recognize Georgia as the birthplace of wine. In 2015, archaeologists working in Georgia discovered ancient qvevri containing the residue of cultivated grapes. Using archaeological, biomolecular, and other methods, researchers dated these artifacts to 6000 BCE, during the Neolithic Period. A [research report](#) published by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences describes the discovery as the earliest evidence of viticulture and winemaking.

Home to more than 525 indigenous grape varieties, Georgia has deep winemaking roots in every community. In the post-Soviet era, the country's wine industry has transformed itself from a cottage industry into an artisanal powerhouse, producing some of the world's most distinctive wines using both traditional Georgian and European winemaking methods.

The National Wine Agency of Georgia works to preserve the country's qvevri winemaking tradition, control the quality of all Georgian wines, and promote Georgian wines globally.



Interviews, samples, and hi-res imagery available upon request.

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