

GI Story – Bocadillo Veleño

As one of the most famous traditional Colombian sweets, the *Bocadillo Veleño* from the regions of Santander and Boyacá is a bite of high energy and rich flavours packaged into a natural leaf. Made from a local variety of guava fruit, the distinctive characteristics of this sweet treat originate both from the rich local natural ingredients and century-old traditional cultural know-how. It is appreciated by children, athletes and adults alike. For the producers, obtaining legal protection as a geographical indication contributes to ensuring the established quality and reputation, warding off free riders, and adding value to the *Bocadillo Veleño* at home and abroad.

Colombia's vibrant sweet tradition

For centuries, a rectangular morsel of a ruby red and white delicacy has been providing a burst of sweet flavours and scents deriving from Latin America's native guava fruit. The *Bocadillo Veleño* is a gem of guava paste, carefully wrapped in the natural *Bijao* leaf, from the Vélez region in the departments of Santander and Boyacá in the northern Colombian Andes. It has been recognised as a protected geographical indication (PGI) in Colombia since 2017.

In order to safeguard the traditional know-how of local producers against rampant imitations that misuse and dilute the name and quality reputation of the region's famous product, the Colombian-Swiss Intellectual Property Project (COLIPRI) supported the registration of the *Bocadillo Veleño* as a PGI. The first phase of the project ran from 2013 to 2018 and aimed at contributing to higher competitiveness, the added-value of Colombian products, and a positive impact on Colombia's socio-economic development. During the project, the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (IPI), the project implementation agency, supported the community in all the steps leading to the registration of the *Bocadillo Veleño* as a PGI. In a five-year long participative process, COLIPRI facilitated the creation and ownership of the producer organisation, the characterisation of the GI product and its code of practice, as well as provided a market

analysis and technical expertise to help develop sound market strategies such as a GI website¹, participation in different fairs, markets and promotion spaces, as well as developing an informative leaflet.

A fruitful setting

Geographical indications in Colombia have seen considerable developments in the last two decades. As a member of the Andean Community, Colombia participated in the development of the Andean Decision 486² on industrial property, which was finally approved in 2000. This decision gives a legal framework for Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Colombia to initially develop and implement denominations of origin in their country.



Logo Bocadillo Veleño
Source: <https://www.bocadillovelenodo.com/single-post/2017/08/10/socializaci%C3%B3n-de-la-do>

¹ <https://www.bocadillovelenodo.com/>

² <https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/es/can/can012es.pdf>



Tradition: a Bocadillo Veleño being wrapped in a Bjiao leaf.
Source: bocadillovelenodo.com

The denomination of origin is a subcategory of the family of geographical indications, and in 2021, is still the only recognised category of GI in Colombia. The Government of Colombia has provided for the official protection of GIs since 2005³, with *Café de Colombia* being the first GI to be registered in the same year. In 2012, a substantial update of the national legal framework⁴ allowed for a better system that focuses more on the empowerment of local communities and the implementation of the GI, with the 'new' GIs now needing to have a group of producers to manage their collective sign. In parallel, public awareness and the use of GIs have gradually grown, and Colombia is now the Latin American country with the highest number of GIs: 29 in 2021, including 12 handicraft GI products and 7 GIs for specialty coffees. Colombia also promotes GIs abroad: *Café de Colombia* was the first non-European and non-Swiss GI registered in the EU and the Swiss system, and has now been followed by other Colombian GIs, such as cheese, rice, flowers and fruit⁵. The *Bocadillo Veleño* should be the next one to be registered in the EU as the Colombian government has officially made the request. Local producers and governmental agencies are increasingly interested in using the GIs in their collective strategies through a formalised code of practice. Their aim in this regard is to consolidate their value chain, differentiate their product on the market, and strengthen local producer organisations' ownership in rural development at large. Little by little, the 'old' GIs prior to 2012, which did not all have a

local management, are formally asking the Superintendence of Industry and Commerce to administrate their GI on their own and develop their code of practice.

A GI is a collectively managed intellectual property right based on the name of a territory or region. This indication identifies that the product's quality and certain characteristics are both attributable to the geographical origin, including factors such as climate, *terroir* and soil, as well as traditional know-how and local culture. Owing to the collective nature of GI product management, the GI representatives produce and market the GI product according to their own GI product code of practice, thus setting the most appropriate framework conditions to safeguard the product's reputation, quality, and positioning as a value-added product. The continued upkeep of its reputation through the maintenance of the product's quality standard and the adequate management of the GI producer association can support the preservation of local resources and traditional cultural knowledge, in addition to local employment for the regions' sustainable socio-economic development strategies.

The *Bocadillo Veleño*'s production area is located between 1200 and 2200 meters altitude in the Province of Vélez in the departments of Santander and Boyacá. The geography is characterised by the Andean mild humid climate and is well-known for its mountainous landscapes and high biodiversity. Canyons interrupt mountain ranges, while clear waters and wild waterfalls flow freely. The region attracts ecotourism and offers plenty of outdoor activities. Fittingly, this lush environment bears rich fruits with unique flavours that are packed with energy. One is the regional guava variety, which can be red or white – the main ingredient for the *Bocadillo Veleño*. The large differences in temperature between cold nights and hot days result in a high concentrate of sugar levels and the distinctive red colour in the regional guavas, while the local *terroir* gives it a flavour that cannot be found in other regions.

³ https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/sites/default/files/Normograma/docs/decreto_3081_2005.htm

⁴ <https://www.sic.gov.co/sites/default/files/normatividad/Res-57530.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.tmdn.org/qiview/qi/search>

The so-called *Veleño* – literally translated as ‘mouthful’ – holds much popularity among Colombia’s adults and children alike as a widespread household treat to be combined with other traditional delicacies such as fresh cheese to indulge a sweet tooth. In parallel, it has also long supplied energy to professional cyclists as ‘Colombia’s original PowerBar’⁶.

The GI recognition of the *Bocadillo Veleño* in 2017 had a direct impact on imitations of the popular product. In 2014, a national market study showed that half of the products sold as ‘*Bocadillo Veleño*’ were not even produced in the province of Vélez. After 2017, all imitators changed their packaging, and now, even if the product is still visually the same, the labels do not use the GI name, but rather ‘guava paste’, ‘fruit paste’, or just ‘*bocadillo*’.

Traditional production

The method of production has been practiced for several centuries among the local population and is known throughout Colombia as the ‘guava axis’, using almost 50,000 tons of guava to produce around 25,000 tons of guava-based sweets every year. It is estimated that the income of 1300 families depends on the industry surrounding the *Bocadillo*, from the *Bijao* leaf and guava producers to the *Bocadillo* processors. Fresh guava fruits of a red and white regional variety are collected and their pulp is extracted and crushed. Once the fruit’s seeds have been removed, the pulp is cooked with sugar only, without any colorants or other additives, and stirred continuously for about three-quarters of an hour in a copper or stainless steel pan. This process is carefully monitored as the colour and consistency develop and are subsequently verified manually by the master cook – the highest rank among the *Bocadillo* producers. Once the exact consistency has been formed, the hot red and white guava pastes are poured in layers into traditional wooden moulds and then cooled for two days.

The cooled, hardened guava paste is cut manually with a steel cutter and each block is left to dry for a further 12 hours on wooden racks. Each piece of *Bocadillo Veleño* is then hand wrapped in a *Bijao*

vegetable leaf. These leaves are large and plucked from a local plant, allowing for biodegradable packaging that stays true to the tradition and unique biodiversity offered by the region. The packaged cubes are then collected in the traditional wooden boxes⁷ and cartons, which are then also sold by the unit.

Finally, a seal of authenticity bearing the national GI logo, ‘*Denominación de Origen Protegida Colombia*’, is placed on the package. This GI logo placed next to the name certifies to the consumer that the product has been manufactured according to the *Bocadillo Veleño* GI code of practice established and controlled by *Fedeveleños*, the representative producer organisation, as a way to safeguard authenticity in the making of Colombia’s national sweet delicacy.



Melted guava paste during the production of *Bocadillo Veleño*
Source: bocadillovelenodo.com



A *Bijao* plant
Source: bocadillovelenodo.com

⁶ Alps and Andes, [Secrets of Colombian Cycling](#)

⁷ *Bocadillo Veleño*, [El Proceso](#)

FedeVeleños

The GI protection and the delegation to locally administrate it were granted by Colombia's *Superintendencia de Industria y Comercio* to the producer organisation, *Federación de la Cadena Productiva del Bocado Veleño* – the *FedeVeleños*⁸ for short. This group of *Bocado Veleño*, guava and *Bijao* leaf producers collectively gathered around the GI initiative in 2015 and now represents and protects the interests of the stakeholders of the value chain. It works to promote the product primarily on national markets. Further to these activities, *FedeVeleños* participates in scientific research programmes related to production, such as an exchange of good practices with *Bijao* leaf producers from Peru, and the implementation of Agricultural Good Practice with local technical entities such as the SENA and Agrosavia. *FedeVeleños* also promotes educational campaigns on environmental conservation, including raising awareness of the sustainable management of resources such as soil, water and agrochemicals⁹. Moreover, *Bocado Veleño* festivals have been held during the region festivities as well as online.

Sweet and beyond

In the second phase of the Colombian-Swiss Intellectual Property project (2019-2023), activities are continuing to support the consolidation of the Colombian GI system. For example, a national GI platform is in the making, so that the 29 GIs can pool and share costs to promote and defend their product, as well as be a single contact for the Colombian government and private partners. Likewise, exchanges between GI communities are often held to share lessons learnt and best practices to continually improve quality processes such as certification, as well as to further commercialisation and strengthen enforcement efforts against any fake products. By raising awareness of the opportunities that GIs offer, producer organisations are encouraged to register and manage their GIs, and share resources and increase visibility of Colombian GIs. This seeks not only to raise the value and competitiveness of Colombian products at home and abroad, but also to present opportunities to link the value of GIs to regional tourism initiatives and support sustainable rural development and environmental conservation.



Bocado Veleño festivals held by FedeVeleños
Photo credits: Claire Philippoteaux

⁸ Bocado Veleño, [FedeVeleños](#)

⁹ Sistema de Información de Gestión y Desempeño de Organizaciones de Cadenas, Minagricultura, [Denominación de Origen para el bocado veleño](#)

To wrap up

The vibrancy of Colombia's culture, tradition, nature and delicacies are all packaged within the *Bocadillo Veleño*. In the process of becoming a recognised and protected GI, the sweet treat has brought together stakeholders under the *FedeVeleños* to consolidate value chains, further the product's commercialisation and fend off imitations. At the heart of this also lies the

preservation of tradition and environmental conservation. While the work towards achieving higher competitiveness and ensuring sustainable production against imitations and changing times is still ongoing, once in a while, stock can be taken to enjoy nature and its sweet traditions.

1er Festival Virtual del Bocadillo

Septiembre 25 al 27

Ampliamos nuestro plazo de venta

PIDE TU KIT HASTA EL 27 DE SEPTIEMBRE
a través de nuestras plataformas, para disfrutarlo en casa durante la realización del Festival.

En los municipios: Bucaramanga, Floridablanca, Girón, Piedecuesta, San Gil, Socorro, Barbosa, Vélez, Monquirá y Bogotá, sólo deberás pagar el domicilio.
En el resto del país deberás pagar el gasto de envío.

Organiza: Fedevaleños

Patrocinan: Asofrucol, FONDO NACIONAL DE FOMENTO HORTIFRUTÍCOLA, CÁMARA DE COMERCIO DE BUCARAMANGA

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and imposed restrictions, events were moved online.
Source: bocadillovelenodo.com



Production: key ingredients and stages
Source: bocadillovelenodo.com

For more information, contact:

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