



The California Raisin Industry

Nearly 2,800 California Raisin growers produce 99.5% of the US raisins and approximately 40% of the world's crop within a 100 mile radius of Fresno, California.

Two-thirds of that production is consumed in the US and Canada while one-third is exported. Japan and the United Kingdom are the largest export markets.

What are raisins?

Processed raisins are dried grapes of the Vinifera variety such as the Natural Seedless. Natural Seedless raisins can be of the Thompson variety but can also include several newer varieties such as Fiesta, Selma Pete and DOVine. The processed raisins are prepared from clean, sound, dried grapes, which are properly stemmed and capstemmed, then sorted, cleaned and washed in water to assure a wholesome product.



Are there different sizes or grades of raisins?

California Raisins come in three sizes: Select, Small, and Mixed. Select size raisins means that no more than 60 percent, by weight, of all the raisins will pass through round perforations 8.7mm (22/64-inch) in diameter. Small or midget size raisins means that 95 percent, by weight, of all the raisins will pass through round perforations 9.5mm (24/64-inch) in diameter, and not less than 70 percent, by weight, of all raisins will pass through round perforations 8.7mm (22/64-inch) in diameter. Mixed size raisins means a mixture which does not meet either the requirements for Select size, or for Small or midget size.

How are raisins made?

After harvesting from the vines, raisins are sun-dried then loaded into bins for preparation. Before they are unloaded from their bins, government inspectors take long prods to gather samples from the middle of each box. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) standards must be met to ensure that each box is free of imperfections. Next, raisins are processed, which means they go through a series of conveyor belts and drums to remove remaining stems, chaff or lightweight fruit. The raisins also are sent through a vacuum air stream to catch any other undesirable materials. Finally, they're size-graded and thoroughly washed in pure water.



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In preparation for packaging, the raisins are moved through a laser sorter. The sorter's light beams, along with a computer, see if anything beside raisins is passing through the stream. If material other than a raisin is present, the computer sends a burst of air to knock it out of the stream of raisins and down a trough.

California Raisins are inspected under the most rigid standards. Quality control technicians inspect the raisins by hand throughout the packaging process, thus assuring that California Raisins are the cleanest, highest quality in the world.

After final inspections, raisins are automatically weighed and packed in a variety of convenient sizes. California Raisins are then shipped throughout North America and the world for consumers to enjoy.

Part of the crop is used to make raisin juice concentrate (a minimum of 70 percent natural fruit soluble solids) and raisin paste (made from 100 percent raisins), which are added to a variety of foods, including dairy, confectionery and bakery items.

Raisin juice and raisin paste?

From part of the crop, the processors make raisin juice and raisin paste. Raisin juice is a pure extract of raisins. Throughout several processing stages, raisins are leached with water to produce raisin juice. The liquid is then evaporated in a vacuum pan to produce a self-preserving concentrate. Raisin juice concentrate contains a minimum of 70 percent natural fruit soluble solids. It's added to a variety of foods, including dairy, confectionery and baking items. Raisin juice extends the shelf-life of bread products; it is a natural substitute for preservatives; and it sweetens and colors natural baking goods. For confectionery items, raisin juice acts as a sugar substitute and a filling for hard candies and molded chocolates. In crisp cookies and crackers, raisin juice helps control breakage. With chewy or soft cakes and cookies, the raisin juice can help maintain moisture. It also is a natural binding agent in cereal bars. Raisin juice serves as a natural syrup for yogurts and ice cream. It enhances the color and flavor of chocolate milk and ice cream. It also brings out the flavors of condiments and is an all-natural coloring agent.

Raisin paste is made from 100 percent raisins, produced by extruding raisins through a fine mesh screen. Raisin paste can be used to add visual appeal and flavor. It's a stable ingredient that sweetens naturally. Raisin paste is used in sundae-style yogurts and cottage cheese, as well as in ice cream and frozen novelties. It's also found in fruit-filled cereal products, granola bars and extruded breakfast cereals. Raisin paste has excellent sweetening capabilities in fine confectionery fillings and soft-center candies. In bakery items, such as breads, cookies and pasteries, the paste inhibits molds, extends shelf-life and enhances flavor.

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