

# Australian Dried Grape Varieties

## Sultanas

Sultanas are seedless white grapes that take their name from the ancient Persian (Iranian) city of Soutanieh, where they are believed to have originated. Over thousands of years, the variety spread across the Middle East, Southern Russia and Western China.

In Australia, Sultana cultivation began in 1867. The majority of Australian Sultanas were planted from cuttings that can be traced to vines held in glasshouses in England. Then known as "Lady Coverley's Grape", these were used to establish vineyards in the Cape of Good Hope, near Cape Town in South Africa and from there, cuttings were brought to Australia by sailing ship. One of the main grape varieties dried in Australia, Sultanas are harvested early in the year, from around mid-February.

The annual production of Sultanas in Australia currently fluctuates between 13,000 and 30,000 tonnes. About half of this is consumed locally and the rest is exported overseas. Up to four kilograms of freshly picked Sultanas are required to produce just one kilo of dried fruit. No sulphur is used in the process of drying Australian Sultanas; rather, the fruit is sprayed with an emulsion of Potassium Carbonate and a refined vegetable oil. This alters the wax layer of the skin of the berries allowing moisture to pass through the grapes so they dry faster.

Australian Sultanas range in colour from pale gold to amber to dark brown and they are classified by size, colour and texture. The grade determines the most suitable end use of fruit, for example, most bread bakeries prefer higher quality golden fruit.

A versatile fruit, Australian Sultanas can be used in many ways. Add them to cakes, cereals, biscuits and desserts, or use them to enhance flavours in savoury meat, chicken and fish recipes. They are also an ideal, healthy snack on their own.

Sultanas are best stored in a cool, dry, clean and well-ventilated area, at 10-15°C, with relative humidity below 50%.

## Raisins

Raisins are among the oldest dried fruits known to man and have been enjoyed since ancient times. The name derives from the Latin "racemus", which means "a cluster of grapes or berries". The Romans produced a Raisin wine that they called *Acinatisius* and they also used the fruit at their banquets. Raisin cakes are mentioned in the Old Testament.

The first dried vine fruit industry associations in Australia were called "The Mildura Raisin Trust" and the "Renmark Raisin Trust", both formed in 1895. In 1907, they joined together to become the "Australian Dried Fruits Association".

Raisins are produced from Muscat Gordo Blanco or Waltham Cross grapes. These varieties all contain seeds that are removed during processing to produce seeded or stoned Raisins.

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Australian Dried Fruits Association

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