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The Traditional Harvesting and Drying Method

Many growers still use the traditional method of picking grapes by hand. This involves use of seasonal workers who travel to the growing areas to undertake this work. Bunches are picked and placed into buckets.

Freshly picked grapes are placed on large, multi-tiered wire netting racks to dry naturally in the sun for about ten days. The grapes on the rack are sprayed with an emulsion of Potassium Carbonate and a refined vegetable oil. This emulsion alters the wax layer on the skin of the grapes and allows the moisture in the berries to move out through the skin. The hot, dry summer air removes moisture from the fruit, locking in the natural sugars. The grapes are then placed onto large plastic sheets for final sun drying.

Some growers also use gas dehydrators to dry their grapes. This involves enclosing the racks in plastic sheets through which hot air is circulated.

Trellis Drying

Trellis drying, also known as summer pruning, was developed by the CSIRO in the late 1960's and is now the technique used by a number of growers.

The fruiting canes are cut to separate the bulk of fruit bunches from the vine, while retaining at least 50% of the foliage. The grapes are then sprayed, ensuring they are thoroughly wetted.

Around three weeks later, when the fruit has dried to at least 16% moisture content and the stems are brittle, the grape bunches are mechanically harvested. The harvester moves along the rows, shaking the fruit from the vine and removing dry leaves and sticks from the fruit at the same time.

The fruit is then collected in large bins and finish dried in bin dehydrators.

Sorting and packing

The dried fruit is taken to a local processing company for grading, cleaning and packing. It is carefully checked to ensure that it meets the most rigorous quality standards and then processed to clean the fruit and remove unwanted material including stems. The fruit is then packaged for sale on domestic or export markets.

Preparing fruit for sale

Australian dried fruit producers use only state of the art packing machines and equipment to ensure quality control. These fill and then seal their distinctive packets for delivery to supermarkets and food outlets throughout Australia and overseas.

Fruit destined for export is sent in sealed shipping containers, so that it arrives in first class condition.



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Australian Dried Fruits Association

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Growing, Drying & Processing